



PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION SIGN IN SHEET

OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
 Tuesday, September 7, 2010 6:00 PM
 Oconee County Administrative Offices
 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

Limited to forty [40] minutes, four [4] minutes per person.

Citizens with comments related to a specific action agenda item will be called first.

If time permits additional citizens may be permitted to speak on a non agenda items [at the discretion of the Chair].

Council may make closing comments directly following the public & extended public comment sessions if time permits.

PLEASE PRINT

Please Note that Ordinance 2010-30 "AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AN OCONEE COUNTY CONSERVATION BANK TO FUND THE PROTECTION OF LANDS WITH SIGNIFICANT NATURAL, CULTURAL AND/OR HISTORIC RESOURCES IN OCONEE COUNTY" has been removed from consideration at this meeting.

	FULL NAME	AGENDA ITEM FOR DISCUSSION
1	James Neal Workman	
2	X Brit Adams	Transparency
3	X Brit Adams Tom Markovich	Camp Plans
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	X B. J. [Signature]	
11		

Now-agenda item -
 X J. Neal Workman -

Comments on Ordinance 2010-17

Tom Markovich, owner
Markovich Homes
309 Rochester Hwy
Seneca SC 29672
Ph 864-933-0126

I am commenting on Ordinance 2010-17 because it affects my business as well as the business of many others in Oconee County. It is my opinion there are a number of points that have been overlooked in revising the ordinance affecting Oconee County roads and bridges. Several points in the proposed ordinance seem to be in conflict with other passages in the main chapter of the ordinance, Chapter 26.

First, the new language of Section 26-7 (a) seems to create a very complicated explanation that emanates from a passage in 26-3 (e) (10), which very simply says the county engineer must approve driveway locations. In doing so the county engineer must make a full investigation of the matter considering all factors including the applicant's needs. This seems to be overzealous since Chapter 26 makes it clear there are no standards for private driveways. Additionally the language seems to indicate the applicant could be denied permission to encroach on the right-of-way which would seem to deny the applicant the right to ingress and egress to their property. I doubt this is the intent of the county but none the less could pose a legal issue.

Second, I do not have a specific issue with the county doing work for a person on the counties right of way but asking them to sign a hold harmless agreement seems to conflict with the SC Statute of Repose. There may also be some issues considering the fact the county is offering to contract without a license, depending on how much the contracted amount is.

Third, the driveway encroachment permit has been construed to be only applied for by the owner and a contractor cannot represent the owner's interest. This does nothing but slow down the permitting process. In some cases when a owner is from outside the area it can take weeks to get an encroachment permit signed by the owners. In all other matters concerning the construction of a dwelling a contractor has the ability to represent the owner. Furthermore by not allowing the contractor to endeavor in this matter will only serve to create a disconnect in how the dwelling is connected to the public right of way.

Forth, there is conflict with the main body of Chapter 26 regarding who can accept roads and right of ways.

The last point is regarding a fee for a driveway connection. I do not have an issue with some of the fees a developer pays to have roads approved by the county, as long as they are reasonable. However, driveways are different. There is no question when a person purchases real property in SC they are guaranteed the right to ingress and egress. In general, fees can be applied to services someone receives that are over and above what the rest of the public receives. The reason this should not be applied to driveways is because every single person connects to the right of ways in Oconee County by way of a driveway or some type of egress. Someone that now must apply for a permit to have a driveway is not receiving anything the rest of the citizens have not received. I believe for the county to try to charge someone a fee for a right they have already acquired is very unreasonable.

It is my opinion the above mentioned issues need to be addressed before passing 2010-17. I offer this input in the spirit of making improvement to your ordinance and I hope it will be accepted as such.

Sincerely,
Tom Markovich



OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
ABSTENTION FORM

Council Member Name: MARIO SUAREZ
(Please Print)

Council Member Signature: *Mario Suarez*

Meeting Date: 9/7/2010

Item for Discussion/Vote: 8/17/10 Council Minutes
8/24/10 Special w/ QRSA

Reason for Absention: I was not present for original meeting/discussion
 I have a personal/familial interest in the issue.
 Other: _____

E. Hulse
Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council

[This form to be filed as part of the permanent record of the meeting.]



OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
ABSTENTION FORM

Council Member Name: Joel Thrift
[Please Print]

Council Member Signature: Joel K. Thrift

Meeting Date: 9/7/10

Item for Discussion/Vote: Ordinance 2010-31

Reason for Absention: I was not present for original meeting/discussion

I have a personal/familial interest in the issue.

Other: Recuse based on
perception of relationship
with property owner

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council

[This form to be filed as part of the permanent record of the meeting.]



OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
ABSTENTION FORM

Council Member Name: Wayne McCall
[Please Print]

Council Member Signature: [Signature]

Meeting Date: 9/7/10

Item for Discussion/Vote: Ordinance 2010-21
votes (2x) @ 8/17/10
meeting

Reason for Absention: I was not present for original meeting/discussion

I have a personal/familial interest in the issue.

Other: Mr McCall stated that
he does work w/ both state
& federal contracts there
he abstained from this
vote.

[Signature]
Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council

[This form to be filed as part of the permanent record of the meeting.]



OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL
ABSTENTION FORM

Council Member Name: Wayne McCall
(Please Print)

Council Member Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Meeting Date: 9/7/10

Item for Discussion/Vote: MIN 8/24/10 meeting

Reason for Absention: I was not present for original meeting/discussion
 I have a personal/familial interest in the issue.
 Other: _____

[Handwritten Signature]
Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council

[This form to be filed as part of the permanent record of the meeting.]

THE WESTERN PIEDMONT REGIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE WINS BARRETT LAWRIMORE MEMORIAL REGIONAL COOPERATION AWARD

The Western Piedmont Regional Emergency Management Task Force (*Anderson, Abbeville, Greenwood, Oconee, and Pickens counties*) won this year's Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award for partnering with the U.S. Army Reserve and hosting an extremely ambitious full-scale local disaster exercise in June involving FEMA, SLED, 105 additional local, state and federal agencies and private industries, utilities and volunteer organizations. Called "Red Dragon/Palmetto Shield," the exercise simulated a multiple weapons attack by terrorists. "The ability of local governments to effectively call on and integrate federal and state resources is vital to disaster management," SCAC President Diane Anderson said. "The exercise was undertaken to help establish the necessary relationships between local, state and federal agencies involved in mitigating a local disaster."

The Western Piedmont Regional Emergency Management Task Force previously won the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award in 2006 and 2008.

2010

**BARRETT LAWRIKORE MEMORIAL
REGIONAL COOPERATION AWARD**

Presented to

**Western Piedmont Regional
Emergency Management Task Force**

S.C. ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Regional Census Center
Charlotte, NC 28273-7007

July 14, 2010

Dear 2010 Census Partner:

Thank you for partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to achieve a complete and accurate census count in 2010. Conducting the decennial census is a massive and vitally important undertaking—one which the Census Bureau could only accomplish with the help and support of partners like you. We appreciate the time and resources your organization dedicated in helping to ensure a successful 2010 Census.

Your commitment to motivate the public to complete and return the census form will have a lasting impact. As a census partner, you can take pride in knowing that your organization helped ensure that the communities you serve are accurately represented in Congress and eligible for the funding needed for important community programs, services and facilities. The 2010 Census data will help your organization, community and government make strategically and fiscally sound decisions to stimulate and sustain economic development and growth, and improve the quality of life in every neighborhood.

Once again, thank you for your contributions to the 2010 Census effort. Please accept the enclosed certificate from Dr. Robert Groves, Director, U.S. Census Bureau, as a token of our appreciation for your support in raising awareness of and inspiring participation in the 2010 Census. We value your partnership and look forward to continued opportunities to work together in the future.

Sincerely,

William W. Hatcher
Regional Director

Enclosure

United States
**Census
2010**

IT'S IN OUR HANDS

*Thank
You*

FOR HELPING
TO PAINT THE
**NEW PORTRAIT
OF AMERICA**



THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU HEREBY RECOGNIZES

Oconee County Planning Department

as a valued partner and offers appreciation for your support
in raising awareness of and inspiring participation in the 2010 Census.

Your efforts to help achieve a complete and accurate
census count have made a lasting impact on the nation.

Robert M. Groves

Dr. Robert M. Groves
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF OCONEE
PROCLAMATION P-2010-04

**A PROCLAMATION HONORING THE
CHICKASAW PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

WHEREAS, Oconee County recognizes that Chickasaw Point has operated its own waste water treatment system since purchasing the assets of Hartwell Utilities from bankruptcy court in 2000. The wastewater is collected and pumped to a wastewater treatment plant for processing and sanitizing prior to discharge into Lake Hartwell .

WHEREAS, Chickasaw Point purchased the community golf course in 2004 from a private owner and began evaluation of discharging treated wastewater onto the golf course utilizing the existing acreage and irrigation system. By conversion to land discharge, Chickasaw Point was able to eliminate 100% of the allowed chemicals in the wastewater being discharged into Lake Hartwell.

WHEREAS, Chickasaw Point after extensive cost analysis, engineering studies and permit applications constructed a lined retention pond, new pump station and new irrigation system pumps which were completed and final approval received from DHEC on June 1, 2010.

WHEREAS, Chickasaw Point spent about \$480,000 to convert from lake discharge to land discharge in order to eliminate chemical treatment to meet permit limits and provide natural nutritional benefits to help grow grass on the golf course by reusing the treated wastewater.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Oconee County Council proclaims its appreciation to the Chickasaw Point Property Owners Association for their efforts to protect the natural environment of Lake Hartwell and Oconee County for future generations.

PROCLAIMED in meeting, duly assembled, this 7th day of September, 2010.

FOR OCONEE COUNTY:

Reginald T. Dexter
Chairman, District V

ATTEST:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Oconee County Clerk to Council

**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

COUNCIL MEETING DATE: September 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 6:00 PM

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

Second Reading of Ordinance 2010-01: "An Ordinance to Amend the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan (2004)"

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

The South Carolina Planning Act states that the "planning commission shall review the comprehensive plan or elements of it as often as necessary, but not less than once every five years", updating it at least every ten years. This is to account for "changes in the amount, kind, or direction of development of the area or other reasons make it desirable to make additions or amendments to the plan." Also, it should be noted that the recently-adopted South Carolina Priority Investment Act required that 2 new elements be added at the time of review or update. Due to the number of changes that have occurred in Oconee County since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, the Planning Commission and staff initiated the review in July 2008, a year earlier than was mandated by the state. As part of the review process, efforts were made to solicit public input through a number of venues, including a series of community meetings in various areas of the county; stakeholder discussions, with a session on each element; brochures and handouts designed to allow individuals to suggest changes to the future land use map; and a webpage containing information and links to relevant documents; as well as regular updates at Planning Commission meetings. As a result of the review and input received from the public, in addition to the required additions, significant updates to the document have been drafted to better reflect the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County. Ordinance 2010-01 will amend the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan to add the new elements and updates. County Council gave First Reading in Caption Only on January 19, 2010, and the Planning Commission recommended the draft by resolution on January 11, 2010. A joint workshop was held to discuss the draft updates with the Planning Commission on February 22, 2010.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? Yes / No [review #2001-15 on Procurement's website]
If no, explain briefly: N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Take Second Reading of Ordinance 2010-01, and schedule the required public hearing (note: state law requires that the hearing be advertised for *no less than 30 days prior*)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None anticipated to result from adoption; however, implementation of some components of the Plan will require funding on a case-by-case basis.

ATTACHMENTS

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney _____ Finance _____ Grants _____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Ant H L

Department Head/Elected Official

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

Council has directed that they receive their agenda packages a week prior to each Council meeting, therefore, Agenda Items Summaries must be submitted to the Administrator for his review/approval no later than 12 days prior to each Council meeting. It is the Department Head / Elected Officials responsibility to ensure that all approvals are obtained prior to submission to the Administrator for inclusion on an agenda.

A calendar with due dates marked may be obtained from the Clerk to Council.

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF OCONEE
ORDINANCE 2010-01**

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE OCONEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, pursuant to the requirements established in Title 6, Chapter 29 (the “Act”) of the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, as amended (the “Code”), the Oconee County Council (the “County Council”) by Ordinance (Ordinance 2004-25) adopted on November 30, 2004, a Comprehensive Plan (the Plan); and,

WHEREAS, the Code requires local planning commissions to review comprehensive plans no later than every 5 years, and update them no later than every 10 years; and,

WHEREAS, the Oconee County Planning Commission (the Commission) initiated a review of the Plan in 2008; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission invited input from all citizens and interested parties; and,

WHEREAS, the review process included a series of community meetings, stakeholder discussions, and other opportunities for members of the public to offer input; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission duly considered all comments and other forms of public input in developing a series of proposed changes to the adopted Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission made recommendation of these proposed changes to County Council; and,

WHEREAS, after considering the Commission’s recommendations, public input, and other pertinent factors, County Council deems it appropriate and necessary to amend and update the Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby ordained by Oconee County Council, in meeting duly assembled, that:

1. The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan be amended to read as set forth in Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and hereby incorporated by reference as fully as if set forth verbatim herein.
2. Should any part or provision of this Ordinance be deemed unconstitutional or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such determination shall not affect the rest and remainder of this Ordinance, all of which is hereby deemed separable.
3. All ordinances, orders, resolutions, and actions of Oconee County Council inconsistent herewith are, to the extent of such inconsistency only, hereby repealed, revoked, and rescinded.
4. This Ordinance shall take effect and be in full force and effect from and after third reading and enactment by Oconee County Council.

ORDAINED in meeting, duly assembled, this _____ day of _____, 2010..

By: _____
Reginald T. Dexter, Chairman, County Council
Oconee County, South Carolina

ATTEST:

By: _____
Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to County Council
Oconee County, South Carolina

First Reading: January 19, 2010 [in title only]
Second Reading: September 7, 2010
Public Hearing:
Third Reading:

Comprehensive Plan Update



Appendix A

Recommended by Planning Commission to the
County Council on January 11, 2010

Goals

- Population Element
- Natural Resource Element
- Cultural Resource Element
- Community Facilities Element
- Housing Element
- Economic Development Element
- Land Use Element
- Transportation Element
- Priority Investment Element



Goals

This section contains the goals established by this Comprehensive Plan, which are based on the needs and desires set forth in the various elements. Each broad goal is supported by constituent objectives that address those identified needs, with appropriate strategies designed to ensure a successful outcome. It should be noted that specific objectives and strategies stemming from priorities established in more than one element have been appropriately stated to accomplish the desired results expressed in all elements (the elements to which each objective applies is noted). In addition, the county agencies deemed responsible for monitoring and facilitating the success of the effort are also named, as well as a timeline considered sufficient for completion.

Goal # 1

Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality and quantity of Oconee County's natural resources.

Objective 1: Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future economic development in Oconee County.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Work to facilitate the establishment of a partnership with water providers aimed at expanding service into underserved unincorporated areas of the county.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
2. Partner with municipalities in inventorying current condition of their water infrastructure systems to determine ability to accommodate future growth.	Infrastructure Advisory Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Work to develop agreements with water providers to coordinate with County on a plan provide for required fire protection for new development.	Emergency Services Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2012

Objective 2: Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Expand sewer service throughout areas designated by the Land Use Element as primary areas of development, while implementing appropriate limits needed to avoid negative impacts on sensitive areas.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Implement requirements for all developer-initiated sewer expansions to be configured with sufficient capacity to allow existing and future affected property owners to connect to the proposed line.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Work with neighboring counties when possible to establish regional efforts to expand sewer service into prime commercial and industrial locations.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Partner with municipalities and Joint Regional Sewer Authority to coordinate efforts to provide sewer throughout high growth corridors.	Infrastructure Advisory Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Establish partnership(s) with regional, state, and federal agencies to find funding sources for wastewater treatment needs.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
6. Study and establish increased access to sanitary boat dump stations on area lakes.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2013

Objective 3: Initiate efforts to develop the foundation of a county stormwater management program prior to federal mandates, thereby allowing for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation possible in the event of designation.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Economic Development; Land Use

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Study and evaluate options available to jurisdictions designated by EPA to establish storm water management programs, identifying those attributes desirable for an Oconee County program.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
2. Work with state and federal agencies as required to create necessary components of storm water program, when possible, through a phased approach that will lessen impact of meeting mandates.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
3. Support regional efforts to protect watersheds.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 4: Establish a program of managing both water quantity and water quality throughout the county that will ensure efficient utilization, and appropriate conservation, of our greatest natural resource.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Economic Development; Land Use

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Work with state and federal agencies to establish a comprehensive network of water monitoring stations in Oconee County watersheds.	Planning Commission; County Council	2014
2. Establish accurate 7Q10 rating for all water basins in Oconee County.	Planning Commission; County Council	2014
3. Develop a county-wide water usage plan that defines water conservation practices for both normal and drought conditions, and insures that all users share equally in restrictions during drought conditions.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
4. Partner with both public and private entities to develop a county-wide education program designed to promote water conservation.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
5. Study and evaluate the impact of Oconee County's water supply on ISO ratings, and the resulting cost of fire insurance, seeking to identify opportunities for better ratings.	Emergency Services Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2012
6. Partner with adjacent jurisdictions on comprehensive water studies detailing availability from all sources and usages/outflows.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 5: Preserve, protect and enhance Oconee County’s environmentally sensitive lands, unique scenic views, agrarian landscapes, and topographic features.

Applicable Elements: Natural Resources; Land Use

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Encourage use of “Best Management Practices” in farming and forestry operations.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Work to partner with public and private entities in developing a countywide greenway system that will offer opportunities for nature-based recreation in areas where few currently exist.	Planning Commission; County Council	2014
3. Encourage and support collaboration between landowners and public and private agencies in the development of ecologically and economically sound plans for preservation and restoration of forests and farmland.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 6: Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands and scenic areas under pressure.

Applicable Elements: Natural Resources; Land Use; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Establish a county conservation bank to provide for the transfer of development rights and/or conservation easements to protect rural lands, sensitive areas, and significant natural resources.	County Council	2011
2. Identify and establish various funding sources for the county conservation bank identified above; these may include grants, corporate gifts, a percentage of development permit fees, and annual revenue designations.	County Council	2011
3. Provide appropriate assistance from county departments and agencies in efforts to identify and preserve historic structures, significant lands, and scenic areas.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Goal #2

Identify, develop and utilize all tools and funding sources necessary to meet the present and future economic development needs of Oconee County.

Objective 1: Continue support of a comprehensive planning process to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Cultural; Housing; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Land Use; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and update the various components of the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan as needed, not restricted to the minimum time periods established in state regulations.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Improve communication and cooperation between the County and municipalities, state and federal agencies, and other public and private entities.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 2: Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.

Applicable Elements: Economic Development; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and update the Infrastructure Master Plan, insuring that those steps identified provide for the future growth in the county and limit damage to sensitive areas and resources.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2011
2. Adopt and implement the Infrastructure Master Plan.	County Council	2011
3. Utilizing the elements of the Infrastructure Master Plan as a guide, work to establish a sustainable infrastructure upgrade and maintenance program	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission;	Ongoing

supported by a steady revenue stream.	County Council	
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Objective 3: Develop and implement an effective Capital Projects Program that provides the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County’s citizens.

Applicable Elements: Population; Community Facilities; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Seek partnerships with other agencies, municipalities, and private industry to eliminate unnecessary redundancy in facilities and services.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Maintain a Capital Projects Plan with specifics on estimated costs for upgrades and replacements, with timeframes for getting new estimates.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 4: Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Identify and work to establish alternative revenue sources such as special tax districts and local option sales taxes.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Adopt appropriate development impact fees to offset some of the cost of infrastructure and public services.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Broaden utilization of grant monies to assist with capital projects.	County Council	Ongoing
4. Seek to establish public-private partnerships, user-based fees, and other revenue sources to help fund infrastructure.	County Council	Ongoing
5. Work with state and federal leaders to change formulas for state and federal funding that use Census figures that fail to account for the large percentage of non-resident property owners.	County Council	Ongoing

Objective 5: Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Cultural; Housing; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Land Use; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and update the Community Facilities Plan, amending it to reflect the impact of recent growth and the needs of the aging population.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
2. Partner with municipalities to develop coordinated 5- and 10- year Economic Development Plans.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2014
3 Update and adopt the 2004 Infrastructure Master Plan.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2011
4. Evaluate, amend, and implement recreation plans, as necessary.	Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 6: Complete and properly maintain Oconee County’s Geographic Information System (GIS).

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Cultural; Housing; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Land Use; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Complete digitization of parcel data, and implementation and integration of Tax Assessor’s CAMA system.	County Council	2011
2. Expand public access to GIS, emphasizing the accuracy of data collected, usability of mapping website, and the maintenance of data collected.	County Council	Ongoing
3. Establish and maintain a GIS administrative structure that not only promotes efficient service for county agencies, but also serves the mapping needs other public and private entities.	County Council	2010

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Objective 7: Continue to actively promote the recruitment of employment opportunities that provide the best lifestyle for all Oconee residents.

Applicable Elements: Population; Economic Development

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Work with state and federal agencies to attract agribusiness-related grants and revenue sources, and support efforts to establish pilot programs related to new agricultural technologies and products.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Provide appropriate assistance to expand non-traditional and specialty agribusiness opportunities.	County Council	Ongoing
3. Continue partnerships in regional economic development recruitment efforts.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Partner with area colleges and universities to expand local technical training facilities.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Develop sustainable funding mechanism to maintain availability of structures adequate for the needs of modern industry; this may include, but is not limited to, expansion of revenues designated to economic development, public-private partnerships, and grants.	Economic Development Commission; County Council	Ongoing
6. Ensure that all governmental actions be considerate of racial, religious, and cultural groups that comprise Oconee County's population.	County Council	Ongoing

Goal #3

Establish an efficient, equitable, and mutually compatible distribution of land uses that complements Oconee County's traditionally rural lifestyle, yet supports sustainable economic development, protects the environment, and manages future growth and changes.

Objective 1: Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Cultural; Housing; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Land Use; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and update existing land use regulations as needed, to facilitate development that preserves forests, prime agricultural lands, sensitive areas, and natural resources.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Develop reasonable regulations regarding the development of steep slope areas.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
3. Establish green space/open space requirements for new developments.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
4. Establish strategies and adopt measures necessary to create the framework for the efficient implementation of erosion and sediment control regulations.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
5. Support efforts to educate public in the use of best management practices for construction sites.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
6. Consider, and possibly adopt, regulatory components of a program to expand the natural vegetative buffer requirement to all lake front properties; this may or may not include provisions for increasing the size of the buffer to 50 feet.	Planning Commission; County Council	2013
7. Establish a mitigation program for littered and unsafe properties, utilizing funding from alternative funding sources such as state and federal grants, or possibly specialized tax levies.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012

Objective 2: Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle serve to enhance a sustainable economic prosperity.

Applicable Elements: Population; Natural Resources; Cultural; Housing; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Land Use; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Utilize the countywide zoning process to plan appropriate development and protect special areas through rezonings and overlays.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Work to manage urban/suburban development in Oconee County to insure adequate infrastructure is in place to support balanced growth in primary growth areas, while limiting urban sprawl and protecting those areas deemed special.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Identify potential county industrial sites in appropriate areas, and work with public and private entities to secure funding to purchase select properties for potential projects within prime industrial areas.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Promote a diverse economy that includes a mix of employment sectors, including ecotourism, to insure Oconee County remains economically competitive.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Goal #4

Manage our community facilities, infrastructure, and public resources in a manner that ensures both the existing population and future generations may enjoy the benefits and economic opportunities that make Oconee County an attractive and affordable place to live.

Objective 1: Seek local, state, and federal funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Expand coordination of planning efforts with School District of Oconee County to ensure decisions related to school projects are made with the most complete information available, to include all issues related to infrastructure, accessibility, and traffic planning.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
2. Continue to look for opportunities to support and enhance job training, education, and adult back-to-school programs by fostering ties with area universities and vocational technical colleges; this may include promoting the development of satellite programs for better access by local residents.	Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Provide the School District of Oconee County appropriate assistance in efforts to enhance and upgrade education.	County Council	Ongoing
4. Prioritize expansion and upgrades of libraries through the capital improvements plan and coordinate their location with available infrastructure and the location of schools.	Library Board; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 2: Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.

Applicable Elements: Population; Housing; Economic Development; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Create a Housing Task Force, non-profit housing agency, or Trust which would analyze regulatory barriers and seek market-based incentives to promote affordable housing.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
2. Review and amend land development and subdivision regulations as needed to provide incentives to promote the development of high-quality, low-cost housing.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Work with state and local government to find funding sources, such as growth management infrastructure grants, to assist public and private entities seeking funds to develop and rehabilitate high-quality, low-cost housing.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Work with local, state, and federal agencies to reduce barriers to affordability; this may include one-stop permitting, pre-approved affordable housing plans, and payback mechanisms for upgrades to infrastructure.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Adopt and enforce substandard housing regulations needed to ensure health and safety; this may include the adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011

Objective 3: Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Study options and develop long-range solution for the County’s solid waste needs; these may include, but are not limited to, constructing an in-county landfill, partnering with other jurisdictions in developing a regional landfill, or the continuation of long-term contracts with outside parties.	Planning Commission; County Council	2011
2. Seek to partner in the development of a solid waste research facility at a regional landfill.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Identify and construct additional construction and demolition landfill sites within the county.	Planning Commission; County Council	2014
4. Work to reduce the volume of solid waste through increased recycling and composting.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Seek out innovative and alternative technologies that not only provide for a long-term solution to current and projected solid waste needs, but may also be used in the future to mitigate and reclaim closed facilities.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
6. Seek and establish appropriate uses for closed landfill areas, which may include, but will not be limited to, the establishment of solar power generation facilities and appropriate recreation facilities.	Planning Commission; County Council	2014

Objective 4: Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and upgrade existing emergency facilities plans on a regular basis, implementing established goals in a systematic manner.	Emergency Services Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Provide local public safety agencies appropriate assistance in obtaining funding to expand and upgrade operations.	Emergency Services Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Coordinate local public safety planning and activity with regional, state, and federal agencies.	Emergency Services Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Seek to partner with private entities in the development of emergency satellite facilities and specialized response equipment.	Emergency Services Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 5: Continue to monitor closely Oconee County’s compliance with state and federal air-quality standards, adopting and maintaining reduction strategies as necessary.

Applicable Elements: Natural Resources; Housing; Land Use

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Monitor results of current and future radon research.	Planning Commission	Ongoing
2. Partner with Home Builder’s Association and other stakeholders to develop a radon response program; this may include, but is not limited to, an educational component that provides information related to both the cost-savings and potential health benefits of incorporating a radon-mitigation option in early construction stages, or the adoption of new standards requiring proven mitigation methods.	Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Amend and adopt standards as necessary to maintain compliance with the Clean Air Act.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 6: Work to address the age-related problems that may arise among Oconee County’s aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal efforts.

Applicable Elements: Population; Community Facilities; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and upgrade county-owned medical/residential/nursing care facilities as needed.	County Council	Ongoing
2. Support municipalities in efforts to establish public transportation, seeking ways to expand into various parts of the unincorporated areas as appropriate.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Continue to explore ways to increase the efficiency of emergency medical services throughout the county.	Emergency Services Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Seek partnerships with public and private entities to study age-related issues, particularly as they relate to potential impacts on Oconee County.	County Council	Ongoing

Objective 7: Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County’s growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.

Applicable Elements: Population; Community Facilities; Economic Development; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Develop an ongoing systematic road maintenance and upgrade program based on a steady revenue sources.	Road Department; Planning Commission; County Council	2012
2. Develop and maintain a priority road upgrade list that not only considers existing traffic ‘bottlenecks’ and other sources of trouble, but also reasonably anticipates those expected to emerge in the coming decade.	Road Department; Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Consider and adopt appropriate traffic management tools and techniques that utilize concepts such as limiting the number of curb cuts in high-traffic areas.	Road Department; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Prioritize evaluation of all roads lying within primary development areas shown on the Future Land Use Map.	Road Department; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Continue to require developers to provide traffic studies to determine if a road must be upgraded to safely handle increased traffic loads and to cover the costs of road upgrades when necessary.	Road Department; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
6. Enhance communication with local and state D.O.T. staff and projects.	Road Department; Other County Staff	Ongoing

Objective 8: Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.

Applicable Elements: Population; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Promote and assist in the establishment of commuter parking lots to help encourage car pooling, and decrease traffic congestion.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Continue to partner with Clemson Area Transit (CAT) in keeping existing services, while looking for other opportunities to expand public transportation, to include, but not be limited to, van services and other non-traditional forms of mass transit.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Seek and secure methods of expanding transportation in remote areas for clients of facilities such as DSS, hospitals, medical complexes, government facilities, and parks.	County Council	Ongoing
4. Support efforts to establish a high-speed rail stop in Clemson, SC and/or Toccoa, Georgia.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
5. Seek and establish appropriate methods of mass transit that will promote and enhance tourism; these may include, but are not limited to, water taxis, tour boats, and other modes of transport that allow tourists and residents to enjoy natural resources without dramatically increasing traffic.	Mtn. Lakes Conv. & Visitors Bureau; Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 9: Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation, and to promote ecotourism opportunities.

Applicable Elements: Natural Resources; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Develop standards that encourage developers to incorporate sidewalks and bicycle trails into subdivision developments.	Planning Commission; County Council	2013
2. Seek grants for creating nature trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other tools designed to make communities more walkable, reduce vehicle traffic, and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	County Council	Ongoing
3. Upgrade county-maintained parks and recreational facilities to encourage and promote ecotourism opportunities.	Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 10: Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.

Applicable Elements: Community Facilities; Economic Development; Transportation; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Complete ongoing expansion of runway length and upgrade of instrument landing system.	Aeronautics Commission; County Council	2014
2. Construct planned future upgrades, to include relocation of roads, strengthening of runway, as well as any other necessary components as funding becomes available.	Aeronautics Commission; County Council	2014
3. Construct additional hangar space as needed to accommodate anticipated demand.	Aeronautics Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Develop ongoing capital improvements program aimed at upgrading facility to attract additional employers and potential occupants of business parks within the county.	Aeronautics Commission; County Council	2014
5. Seek and establish ways to utilize airport to foster partnerships with Clemson University	Aeronautics Commission; County Council	Ongoing

Objective 11: Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed changes resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the rapid population growth of Oconee County.

Applicable Elements: Population; Community Facilities; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Review and update Community Facilities Plan, amending to reflect impact of recent growth and development and needs of aging population.	Planning Commission; County Council	2013
2. Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in Community Facilities Plan.	Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Look for alternative to tax payer financing of projects such as private partnerships, user based fees, etc.	County Council	Ongoing

Goal #5

Expand appreciation for the arts, cultural heritage, significant natural features, and historic treasures in a manner that both enhances our lifestyle and promotes sustainable economic prosperity.

Objective 1: Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.

Applicable Elements: Population; Cultural; Community Facilities; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Seek partnerships and other forms of assistance for the School District of Oconee County in supporting the arts.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Support local festivals and entertainment events that promote the heritage of the region; this may include, but not be limited to, grants and other appropriate forms of financial assistance.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing
3. Seek to expand role of the Oconee County Heritage Museum in documentation and preservation of local cultural and historical treasures; this may include, but not be limited to, funding of facility upgrades, establishment of various programs and partnerships aimed at promoting specific resources, and addition of staff positions.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; County Council	Ongoing
4. Support high quality library facilities, programs, and services that enhance, enrich, entertain, and educate our diverse and growing population and present opportunities for life-long learning and the exchange of culture	Library Board County Council School District	Ongoing

Objective 2: Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.

Applicable Elements: Natural Resources; Cultural; Land Use; Priority Investment

Strategies for Success	Agencies Responsible	Timeframe for Completion
1. Seek to insure the preservation and protection of sites and facilities currently listed on historic registers in Oconee County; this may include, but is not limited to, the development of partnerships to assist in the purchase of development rights, and adoption of standards governing future alterations.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing
2. Study and identify any additional cultural and historic properties worthy of consideration on historic registers.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2012
3. Provide assistance to local historical and cultural groups in efforts to obtain funding to study, maintain and manage Oconee County historical sites.	County Council	Ongoing
4. Update and maintain GIS data and maps that can be printed and/or displayed on the county website, to provide the public with information on the location of historical and cultural sites.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2013
5. Provide appropriate financial and technical support to the development of the Southern Appalachian Farmstead Project currently underway in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service and other governmental entities.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; County Council	2014
7. Review and adopt appropriate standards aimed at maintaining the state ‘Scenic Highway’ designation for SC Highway 11 and other routes; such standards may be based on adopted Scenic Hwy Corridor Plans or best practices, and may include the designation of the route as a County Scenic Highway.	County Scenic Highway Committee; Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	2013
8. Review and update adopted regulations as needed to ensure all cultural, historical, and natural resources receive the protection necessary to remain a viable component of our lifestyle, as well as playing a role in an expanding tourism economic sector.	Parks, Recreation, Tourism Commission; Planning Commission; County Council	Ongoing



Population Element

Overview

This element examines the demographic and socioeconomic trends of Oconee County. Among the various factors considered are age, gender, race, educational attainment, and income level. When appropriate, comparisons were made with similar attributes from other counties of Upstate South Carolina. Projections of future trends and impacts, as well as statements of goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County, are included in this element.

Oconee County's population has continued to increase since the adoption of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. As a result, existing plans and strategies related to providing services for Oconee's citizens need to be evaluated in an ongoing manner to insure they adequately meet the needs of the growing population. The demand for services increases as the population grows. If we are not prepared for this, existing systems will become stressed and quality will decrease. Naturally, in a perfect world, funds used to provide and maintain services should increase at the same time to meet the demands of the population. In reality, however, we will have to do the best we can with what is available. Therefore, Oconee County will need to analyze and evaluate the most pressing needs of the population, the services they require, and find ways of doing more with what is available.

Continued Changes

By looking at the changes in demographic and social trends that have occurred in the past five years we can assemble a picture of Oconee County's current population that will serve as a guide in making decisions to help make Oconee County a better place for all its citizens. It should be noted, however, that much of the information used to create the picture is taken from estimates based on the 2000 Census. The 2010 Census is currently underway, and updated data pertaining to Oconee County will be available at the conclusion of the count. Trends indicated by the latest census estimates coincide with what one can see traveling throughout the County day to day. Oconee County's growth is expected to continue.

Another factor that influences issues related to the County's population is the number of residents who do not call Oconee County home, but may own land, have a second home (or 3rd or 4th), or may be employed in the county, but live elsewhere. This category of individuals has, in one way or the other, a stake in the County, and places demands on services. As a result of the nature of development that occurs in Oconee County, particularly near the lakes, this category is of greater concern for us than most of our neighbors.

Therefore, even though the Census Bureau provides a reliable look at population as compared to other regions, it does not give a comprehensive picture of the way that population influences Oconee County. To compensate for this fact, as one examines the trends in population, they should keep in mind that Oconee County has a significant group of individuals that, while their primary residence is elsewhere, is invested in the success of our area nonetheless.

Population Trends and Components of Change

The 2000 Census showed the population of Oconee County to be 66,215, a figure reflecting a trend of growth established decades earlier. See Table P-1.

Table P-1

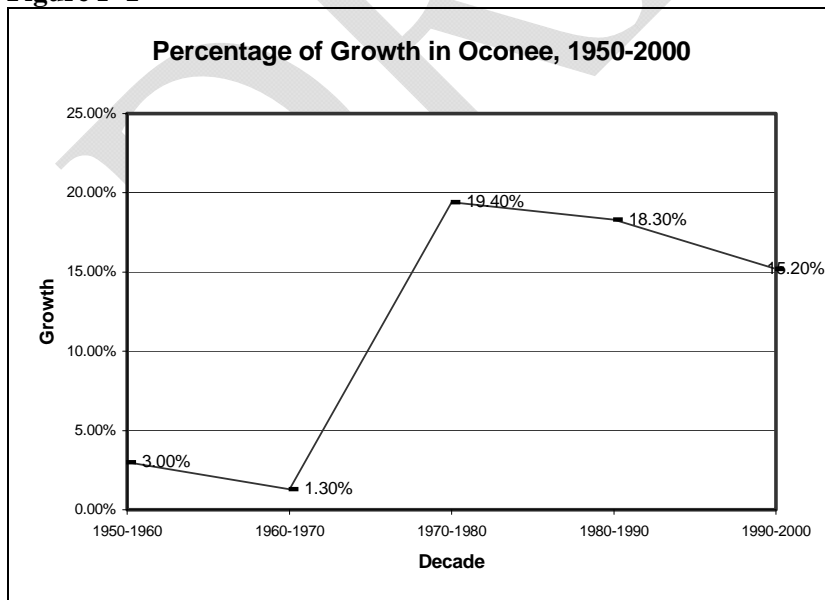
Oconee County Population 1950-2000					
1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
39,050	40,204	40,728	48,611	57,494	66,215

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

During the half century covered by Table P-1, Oconee’s population grew by approximately 70%. A close inspection of the data indicates, however, that between 1950 and 1970 the population increased by only 4.1%. It was only after 1970 that dramatic changes occurred, with the county’s population growing approximately 63% during the next 3 decades!

Figure P-1 graphically illustrates the county’s rate of growth during each decade in the last half of the 20th century.

Figure P-1



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Oconee County's population continued to grow in the years between the 2000 Census and 2004. According to information from the South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, the estimated population of Oconee County on July 1, 2002 was 67,918, reflecting an increase of approximately 2.5% during the first two years of the new century.

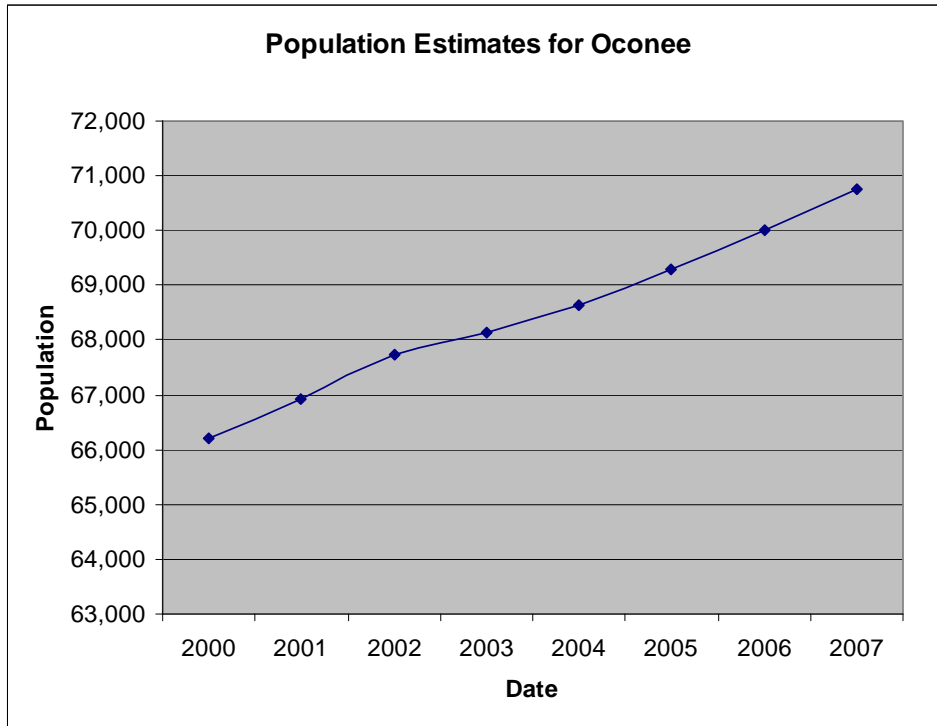
Estimates from the Census Bureau indicate that the population is continuing to increase. The graph titled "Population Estimates for Oconee" (Figure P-2) shows that the population growth is increasing at a steady rate. The Census Bureau has begun preparations for the 2010 census. County staff participated in verifying and updating the Census address list to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information possible. Preliminary findings indicate that 2010 Census may show a dramatic increase in population.

Oconee's population increase is a result of a number of factors, not the least of which is the national shift in population to the Coast and to the South. As a result, we are fast losing our ties or loyalty to a particular place. Computers and wireless technology have allowed us to be connected to 'home' from thousands of miles away. For many, as they get closer to retirement age, with children often living in other states, they begin to look at moving to a warmer climate where the cost of living is lower, and this trend is expected to continue.¹ The 2004 Comprehensive Plan shows that the majority of growth was a result of an ever-increasing retirement community moving to the area. With the nation aging, we can expect that many of them will choose Oconee County.

Another factor that is and will continue to influence the County is shortening of the time it takes to commute to Atlanta and Greenville. As these cities continue to sprawl out, Oconee's beauty and quality of life get closer and closer. What was once a two-hour drive to the metro areas now only takes 45 minutes to an hour. Preparation and careful planning to meet the needs of an ever increasing and aging population will be vital to the health of the County as a whole.

¹ Munro, Jenny. *Boomers urged to plan for assisted living*. Business Writer. September 3, 2008.

Figure P-2



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

We expect that the 2010 Census will confirm the trend seen above.

Regional Population Change

Table P-2 (below) compares Oconee County's change in population between 1990 and 2000 to rates experienced by various counties across upstate South Carolina. The second column compares the 2000 Census numbers to the 2007 estimates.

Table P-2

Comparison of Population Change 1990-2000 in Selected South Carolina Counties		Comparison of Population Change 2000 census and the 2007 estimates
County	Percent Change	Percentage Change
Oconee	15.2%	6.9%
Abbeville	9.7%	-2.7%
Anderson	14.2%	8.6%
Cherokee	18.0%	2.8%

Greenville	18.6%	12.8%
Greenwood	11.3%	3.0%
Laurens	19.7%	0.0%
Pickens	18.0%	4.7%
Spartanburg	11.9%	8.6%
Union	-1.5%	-7.1%
Total South Carolina	15.1%	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table P-2 reveals that Oconee County's growth rate during this period, although not quite as high as in the two previous decades, was still three percentage points under the State average. In fact, most upstate counties experienced strong growth, although Union, Laurens, and Abbeville Counties experienced declines. The largest percentage increase was in Greenville County. Oconee's growth, though not as drastic as in the previous decade, was still strong at approximately 6.9 %.

Components of Change

Table P-3 illustrates the components of the change in Oconee County's population between 1990 and 2000. By examining the rates of birth, death, and migration, it is possible to identify the major factors driving population increases and decreases.

Table P-3

Components of Population Change in Upstate South Carolina, 1990-2000							
County	Total Change	Number of Births	Number of Deaths	Total Natural Increase (Births + Deaths)	Percent of Total Change Due to Natural Increase (%)	Net Migration	Percent of Total Change Due to Migration (%)
Oconee	8,721	7,629	5,716	1,913	21.9	6,808	78.1
Abbeville	2,305	3,262	2,349	913	39.6	1,392	60.3
Anderson	20,563	20,815	15,173	5,642	27.4	14,921	72.6
Cherokee	8,031	6,889	4,602	2,287	28.5	5,744	71.5
Greenville	59,489	49,278	29,017	20,261	34.1	39,228	65.9
Greenwood	6,704	9,158	6,377	2,781	41.5	3,923	58.5
Laurens	11,435	8,258	6,660	1,598	14.0	9,837	86.0
Pickens	16,861	12,660	8,082	4,578	27.2	12,283	72.8
Spartanburg	26,998	33,040	23,536	9,504	35.2	17,494	64.8
Union	-456	3,897	3,566	331	---	-787	---

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

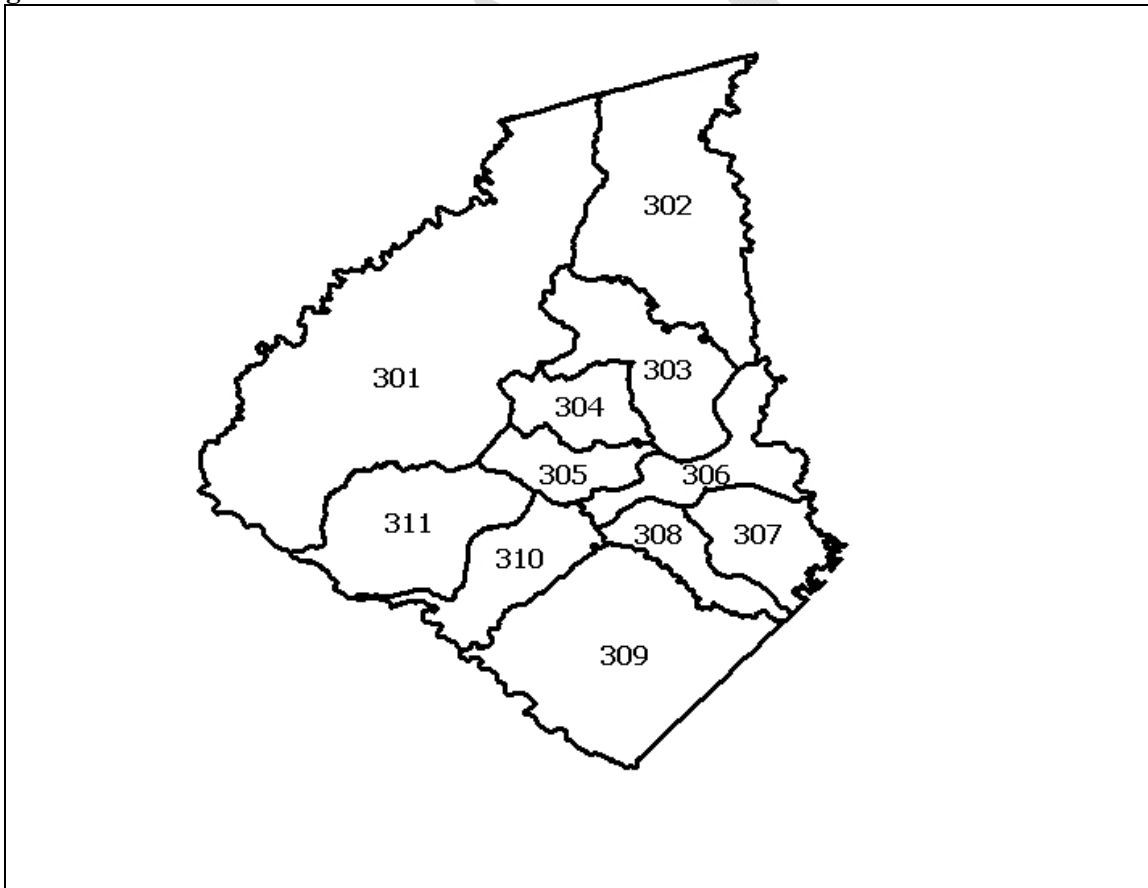
In the decade between 1990 and 2000, the inflow of new residents from other areas accounted for more than ¾ of Oconee County's population change. This places Oconee County near the top of the region in increase due to migration.

Growth by Census Tract

Because population density typically varies from area to area within any given county, the U.S. Census Bureau uses a system of dividing counties into statistical subdivisions, called census tracts. Generally, these tracts are areas that contain between 1,000 and 8,000 people; a tract containing 4,000 people is considered ideal. Over time, as population levels increase or decrease, tract boundaries are subject to change, but because tract limits generally follow established features, such as major landmarks, geographic features, or political boundaries, most are considered stable features. Therefore, while tract boundaries may occasionally be adjusted to accommodate drastic population changes, most typically remain fixed for a number of counts. (U.S. Census Bureau)

Oconee County contains eleven separate census tracts, each of which has a numerical designation between 301 and 311. Figure P-3 illustrates the location of these divisions.

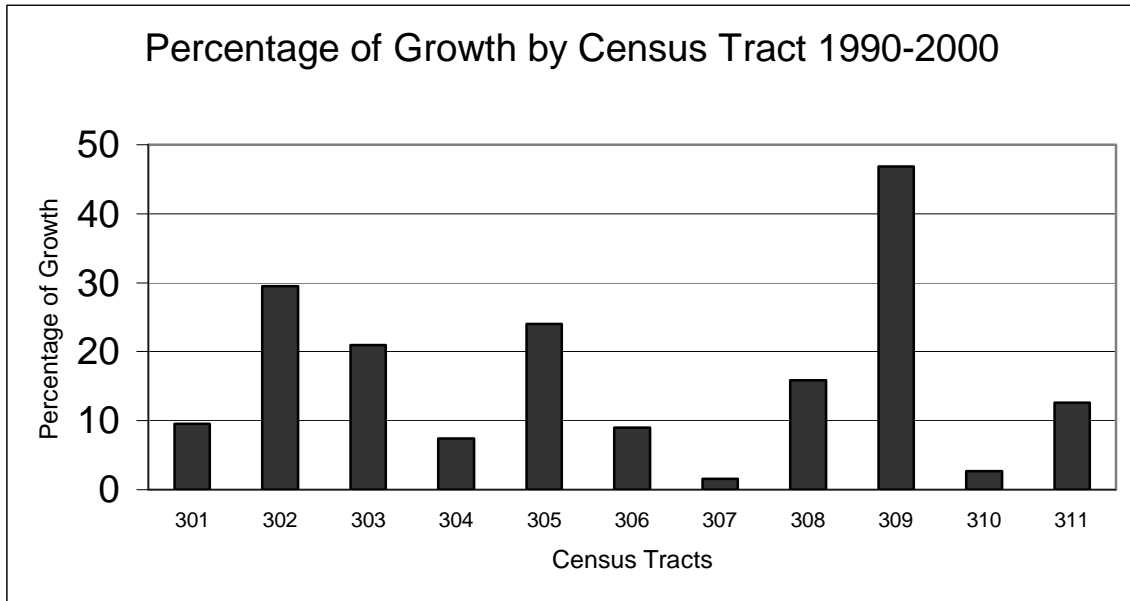
Figure P-3



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure P-4 illustrates the percentage of growth experienced by the areas within each census tract between 1990 and 2000.

Figure P-4



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

By comparing the map in Figure P-3 to the chart in Figure P-4 it is possible to determine the geographic areas of the county that experienced the strongest growth between 1990 and 2000. For example, Tract 309, traditionally one of the county's prime agricultural areas, experienced the most intense growth due to the conversion of farmland into residential tracts. The next highest level was seen in Tract 302, which lies in northeastern Oconee County near Lake Keowee. This area is particularly attractive to retirees from other regions, with many having chosen Lake Keowee as the site of their "dream home". In fact, this area is now the sight of a number of exclusive gated communities, although these communities are not in the majority. Also experiencing significant growth were tracts 303 and 305, both located near the towns of Seneca and Walhalla, the center of the county's main commercial and industrial operations.

Projected Growth in Oconee County

Table P-4 projects Oconee County's future population based on the rates experienced between 1990 and 2000. It must be stressed that this table was constructed by the Oconee County Planning Department to illustrate approximate population levels *if current trends continue at the rates experienced between 1990 and 2000.*

Table P-4

Population Projections Based on Rates Experienced Between 1990 and 2000				
Census Tract	2000 Population	Growth Rate (%) 1990-2000	*Projected 2010 Population	*Projected 2020 Population
301	4,046	9.6	4,434	4,860
302	5,498	29.5	7,120	9,220
303	5,005	21.0	6,056	7,328
304	7,892	7.4	8,476	9,103
305	4,101	24.0	5,085	6,305
306	7,088	9.0	7,726	8,421
307	8,454	1.6	8,589	8,726
308	6,395	15.9	7,412	8,591
309	8,602	46.8	12,628	18,538
310	5,354	2.7	5,499	5,647
311	3,780	12.6	4,256	4,792
County Total	66,215	15.2	77,281	91,531

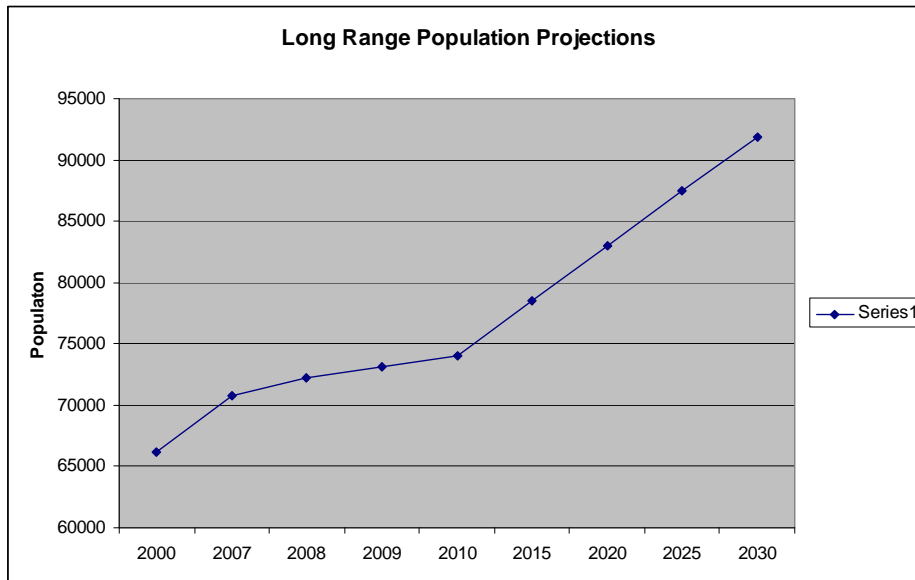
* Projections based on continued growth rate experienced between 1990 and 2000

Source: Oconee County Planning Department

Extending the growth rate illustrated in Table P-4 shows that, without significant change in rates, Oconee County's population will exceed 100,000 by the year 2030. It should be noted, however, that some state sources project Oconee Counties rate of growth to slow from the 15.2% seen in the last census period, to 13.3% between 2000 and 2010; and 12% between 2010 and 2020. If such estimates prove to be accurate, Oconee's population would likely not reach 100,000 until around 2040.

Long Term Population Projections

Figure P-5



Source: US Census Bureau and SC Department of Research and Statistics

Although the accuracy of projections tend to decrease as time intervals increase, the general trends are worth considering. Oconee’s population is expected to increase approximately 40% by 2030. If these estimations hold true, population growth will have a dramatically impact Oconee’s way of life. Such things as travel time to work will increase due to traffic congestion, while the open space that most now take for granted will significantly decrease. To avoid such outcomes, we need to be considering now how we can guide population growth in a manner that increases the effectiveness of the already existing infrastructure. Also, because it will be demanded by the growth, where should new infrastructure be located? How can we best exploit our “advantages” in expanding our economic prosperity? And, as this is an issue increasingly at the forefront of most land use discussions, are there areas of the county too special to be developed? These questions, and many others like them, require citizens to take part and help guide the development of any rules and standards necessary to achieve the balance desired by all.

Population Density

Density, for our purposes, is an objective measurement of the number of people within a given geographic area. Based on the latest estimates, the current population density of Oconee County is approximately 105 persons per square mile. However, it should be noted that the County is blessed with an abundance of national forest land, an abundance of lakes, and an increasing number of areas set aside for conservation. As a result, the basic population density statistic does not take into account the portion of the county that is not available for development. The majority of Oconee County’s developable areas are located in and around the ‘triangle’ of the larger municipalities, Walhalla, Westminster, and Seneca. Therefore, if we wish to arrive at an accurate picture of what we are, we cannot simply look at gross acreage. Still, the trends revealed by basic density evaluations are useful for

communicating the potential effects of continued growth and development. We need to remember, however, that it is very likely that levels of growth represented have effects magnified by the growing amount of land that cannot be developed. Figures P-6, P-7, and P-8 illustrate the change in density since 1950.

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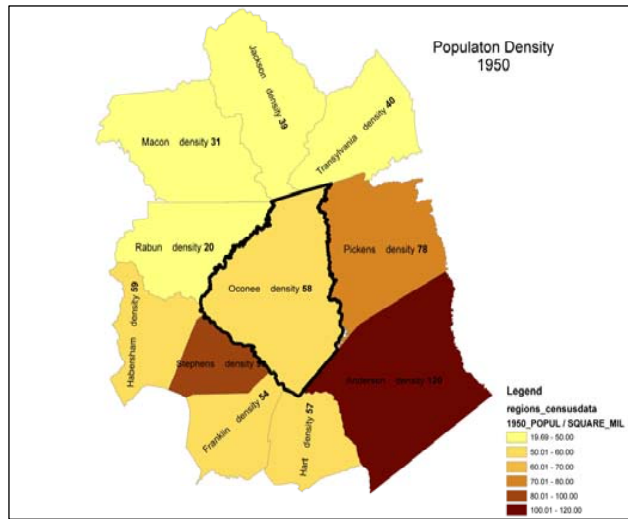


Figure P-6

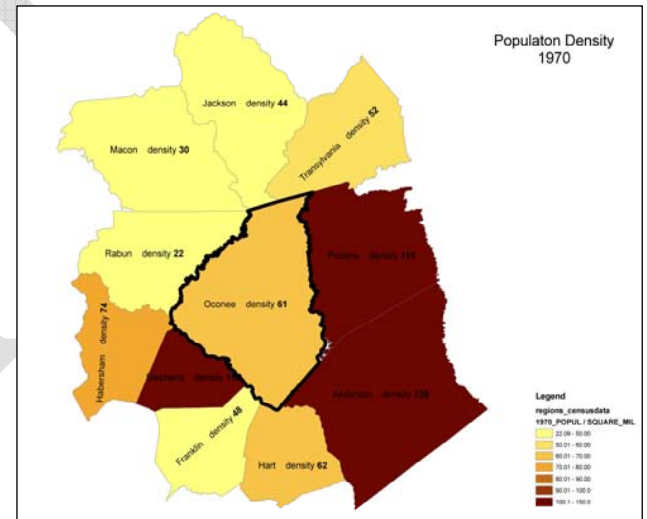


Figure P-7

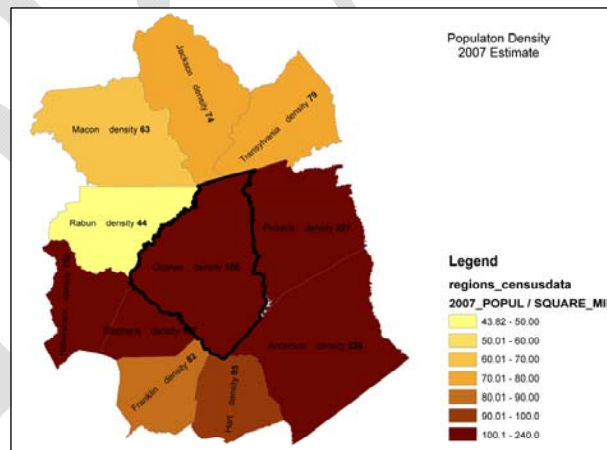


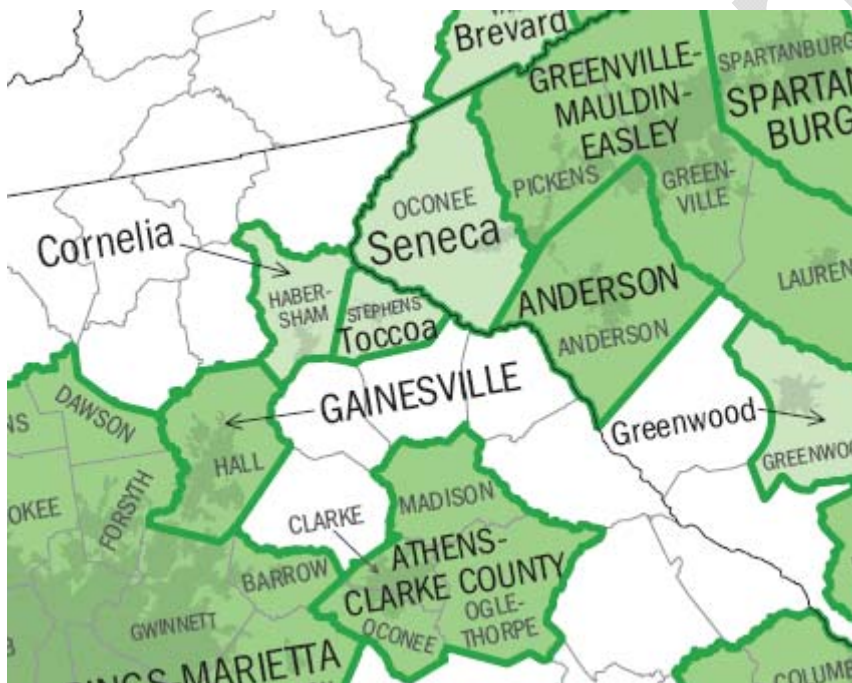
Figure P-8

Source: US. Census Bureau and staff calculations

The Population Density maps above give us a visual representation of the growth that has been steadily moving toward and into Oconee County. This trend will continue as Atlanta and Greenville expand outward. Development will move out toward areas with cheaper land prices, resulting in the shift of people away from the cities. In our case, many people believe it will only be a matter of time until “Atlanta meets Greenville”, possibly here in Oconee County.

In 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau issued new Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Maps that showed Oconee County as a ‘micropolitan’, an area with an urban cluster of at least 10,000 persons. Figure P-9 (below) is a portion of the 2007 MSA map.

Figure P-9



The population growth resulting from the continual sprawl of cities is typically different than that which we have been experiencing to date in the County. Generally, the majority of the growth up until now has been largely driven by retirees drawn to Lakes Hartwell and Keowee. Growth from cities, on the other hand, typically consists of those families with the economic means to move away from the congestion of city life, to an area with a more rural quality, with reasonable commutes, and a less expensive cost of living. Along with this type of growth comes an increase in demand for services focused on the young, such as schools and recreation. If so, with the main focus of retirees remaining near the lakes (primarily Lake Keowee), and the metropolitan sprawl establishing itself on the less expensive lands in the southern end of the county, it is quite possible that we will see over time a geographic segregation of population, and their associated needs.

Gender Division in Oconee County's Population

The gender division of Oconee County's population is approximately the same as that reported for the United States as a whole, with approximately 51% of the county's residents being female, and approximately 49% male. Interestingly, however, the gender division of the population found in the various municipalities varies by as much as several percentage points. See Table P-5 (below).

Table P-5

Gender in Oconee Municipalities in 2000		
Municipality	% Male	% Female
Salem	46.0	54.0
Seneca	46.7	53.3
Walhalla	47.8	52.2
Westminster	47.2	52.8
West Union	51.2	48.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age Ranges in Oconee County's Population

The median age of Oconee's population (the age at which half of the population is older and half is younger) is increasing. This is consistent with a nationwide trend reflecting the impact of the aging of the "baby boomers" born in the years following World War II (between 1946 and 1964). In fact, the 2000 Census revealed that the median age of the United States is the highest that it has ever been, rising 2.4 years over the previous decade to 35.3 years of age. The median age of Oconee's population, however, surpasses this, for it rose from 35.6 years in 1990 to 39.5 years in 2000. This change was perhaps spurred on in large part by a combination of the influx of retirees from other regions, and the effects of the overall improvements in health care, nutrition and working conditions enjoyed by "transplants" and natives alike. Estimates indicate that the U.S. Census Bureau expects the median age to continue to increase throughout the nation at least through the year 2015. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau; South Carolina State Data Center)

The number of "senior citizens" residing in Oconee County has dramatically increased during the last several decades. In fact, the number of Oconee residents over 65 years of age increased over 250% between 1950 and 1990. By the time of the 2000 Census, this group accounted for 10,311 Oconee County residents, or 15.6% of the total population. At the same time, in the neighboring counties of Anderson, Greenville, and Pickens, those 65 years and older represented only 13.7%, 11.7%, and 11.4%, respectively; and statewide the same age group represented only 12.1%. This strong shift toward an aging population in Oconee County becomes even more obvious when looking at historical trends, particularly in the older age groups. In 1950, there were only

77 Oconee residents over 85 years of age. By 2000, the number had grown to 849. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau; South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics)

Table P-6 (below) presents a profile of various age groups in Oconee County. Please note that data for some groups was unavailable.

Table P-6

Profile of Age Groups in Oconee County in 1990 and 2000					
Age Group (years)	1990		2000		Percent Change 1990
	Number	Percent of Population	Number	Percent of Population	
Under 5	3,571	6.2	3,996	6.0	-.2
5-9	*		4,247	6.4	---
10-14	*		4,338	6.6	---
15-19	*		4,090	6.2	---
20-24	*		3,752	5.7	---
25-34	**		8,487	12.8	---
35-44	**17,237	30.0	9,625	14.5	---
45-54	6,817	11.9	9,310	14.1	2.2
55-59	3,120	5.5	4,254	6.4	.9
60-64	2,937	5.1	3,805	5.7	.6
65-74	4,967	8.6	6,237	9.4	.8
75-84	2,353	4.1	3,225	4.9	.8
85 and over	585	1.0	849	1.3	.3
Total population	57,494	100	66,215	100	---

* Available 1990 data profile incompatible with 2000 data profile

** Population of 25-34 age group (1990 only) included in 35-44 age group

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table P-6 shows that in 2000, those between 35 and 44 years of age constituted the largest age group and those 85 and older made up the smallest. The table also shows that those age groups 45 years and older in each instance accounted for a larger percentage of Oconee County's population in 2000 than was the case in 1990. Even without easily comparable data for younger groups, it is possible to determine that the County's population is "growing older". The number of citizens 65 years and older living in Oconee County's municipalities is shown in Table P-7.

Table P-7

Citizens 65 Years and Older in Oconee County Municipalities in 2000			
Municipality	Total Population	Number of Individuals 65 Years and Older	Percent of Total Population 65 Years and Older
Salem	126	28	22.2
Seneca	7652	1223	16.0
Walhalla	3801	598	15.7

Westminster	2743	421	15.3
West Union	297	49	16.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table P-7 reveals that only 22.5% (2,319 out of 10,311) of Oconee County residents 65 years and older live in a municipality.

Racial Composition of Oconee County's Population

Table P-8 (below) illustrates the racial makeup of Oconee County's population.

Table P-8

Racial Composition of Oconee County's Population in 2000									
Area (Census Tract)	Total Population	*Population	*White	*Black	*American Indian/Alaskan	*Asian	*Pacific Islander	*Other	**Population
301	4,046	4,018	3,983	7	9	9	0	10	28
302	5,498	5,472	5,404	33	19	9	0	7	26
303	5,005	4,985	4,938	16	14	4	2	11	20
304	7,892	7,809	7,010	365	30	15	7	382	83
305	4,101	4,069	3,797	159	8	19	1	85	32
306	7,088	7,031	6,425	458	13	83	1	51	57
307.01	3,798	3,751	2,379	1,333	12	10	0	17	47
307.02	4,656	4,605	3,745	803	6	28	0	23	51
308	6,395	6,323	4,622	1,625	14	27	1	34	72
309	8,602	8,565	8,315	188	11	15	1	35	37
310	5,354	5,302	4,756	489	4	14	0	39	52
311	3,780	3,740	3,651	74	5	2	0	8	40
Total County	66,215	65,670	59,025	5,550	145	235	13	702	545

*One racial group **Two or more racial groups

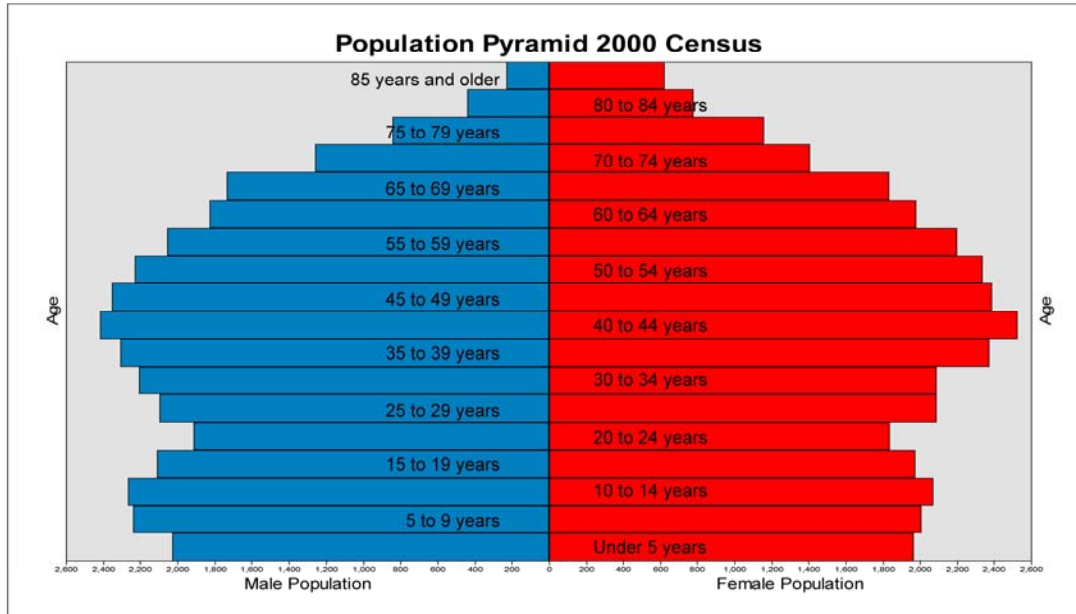
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table P-8 shows that while 89.1% percent of Oconeeans were counted in the white racial group in the 2000 Census (a decrease from 90.5% in 1990), statewide the percentage is much lower at just over 67%. Almost all non-white racial groups, however, increased in Oconee County during the census period; the only exception noted was a slight decrease in the percentage of African American/Black population, which dropped to 8.4%. At the same time, Oconee's Hispanic population showed strong growth between 1990 and 2000, coming to represent almost 2.5% of the county's total population. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau) It should be pointed out that, although there is currently no data available to either confirm or deny the belief; many believe that the Hispanic population was significantly undercounted during by 2000 Census.

Another aspect of population growth that typically provides insight for decision makers is the break down of population by age. If, for example, a large segment of toddlers will be moving through the educational system over the next few years, consideration of the adequacy of facilities to handle the increase in students or additional

early childhood programs may be in order. On the other hand, if the number of toddlers is decreasing, officials need to be looking toward the reallocation of funds to other areas. One of the best ways of examining the population is to look at a population pyramid, which depicts the age structure of the region. Oconee’s population pyramid is ballooning, typical of most places in the post-industrialized world. See Figure P-10 (below).

Figure P-10



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

One of the more noteworthy aspects of Figure P-10 is that the largest segment of the population is over forty years of age, typically the age range when the individuals have started to reach the top of their earning potential and beginning to think about retirement. In addition, the top of the pyramid is relatively large, with the bottom relatively small. This means that the number of young people coming into the workforce will be smaller than the number of people retiring; under existing systems of social security and other similar programs, the burden of supporting more and more people will be placed on the shrinking younger workforce. Further, the chart shows the amount of people in the retirement age category (60 +) is also growing. Typically, one finds population decreasing rapidly in the upper age categories; however, with the current life expectancy in the United States at 77.8 years of age, the percentage of people 75 and older is increasing. This trend is expected to continue. What this means for Oconee County is that services to the elderly population will last longer and as a result cost more.

A report produced by the U.S. Department of Labor, “Issues in Labor Statistics,” examined spending patterns for three general age groupings: under 35, aged 35 to 64, and 65 and over. The report indicates that the “under 35” age group spent approximately \$30,291 per consumer unit, with the highest expenditures in the categories of average annual expenditures going for food away from home, alcoholic beverages, housing, shelter, rented dwellings, apparel and services, transportation, and education. In general, this age group is finishing school, getting their first jobs, and starting out on their own. The report also indicated that this age group is also the least likely to be homeowners. Of

course, this is not surprising because this age group has just joined the workforce, may be trying to pay off school loans with little savings, and starting families.

The 35 to 64 age group is the highest spending group with an average expenditure per consumer unit of \$42,236; in fact, spending more than the other two groups on everything except alcoholic beverages (Under 35), health care (65 and over), and cash contributions (65 and over). At the height of their spending potential, they are typically settled into their careers, their children are in school, and the demands on their income are at their highest levels. Because it has been shown that healthy economies require a significant proportion of the population be comprised of persons in this age group, the County needs to ensure that this age group is prioritized in efforts to bring good paying jobs to the area, and to provide those elements required to retain them.

The final age group mentioned in this report is those persons 65 and over. With the greatest median age in South Carolina, Oconee County is currently the “oldest” county in the state. Table P-15 (below) shows how Oconee compares with some of its neighboring counties.

Table P-9

County	Median Age
Pickens	34.5
Greenville	37.2
Anderson	38.2
Oconee	42.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Being the oldest county in the state has a variety of implications. Most notably, an older population will need to have greater access to medical services and assisted living, particularly as many persons retiring and moving to the area do not bring their family with them. Other impacts, though not as apparent on the surface, also have a tremendous effect on many aspects of life in Oconee County. One of these is the fact that a large, well-educated retired population with sufficient income brings significant political pressure on local government. Currently, Oconee County has several active political and conservation organizations made up of many members of this age group. Their ideals and beliefs have already begun to impact political decisions, and will likely continue to do so in the coming years.

Education in Oconee County

In 2009, the School District of Oconee County operated 21 schools that served over 10,377 students. Among these facilities were 11 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 4 high schools, as well as an alternative school, an adult education facility, and a career center. Supporting the schools were 991 certified employees, and 579 classified employees, which included classroom aides, maintenance and grounds personnel, and clerical and transportation workers. The student teacher ratios at the various school levels were as follows:

Elementary- 14:1
 Middle- 16:1
 High- 16:1

Sixty four percent (64%) of all professional employees possessed Master’s Degrees or higher. (Source: School District of Oconee County)

Table P-16 (below) compares the average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores of the 239 Oconee County high school students that took the test in 2008 with state and national averages.

Table P-10

Average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Mean Scores: 2008				
	Critical Reading	Math	Writing	Composite
Oconee County	501	516	488	1017
South Carolina	484	496	471	980
National	497	510	488	1007

Source: South Carolina Department of Education and US Department of Education

Oconee County students surpassed both the state SAT averages and mirrored the national averages in 2008.

Overall Educational Attainment of Oconee County’s Population

According to information from the South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, 11.1% of Oconee adults older than 25 years of age had less than a 9th grade education in 2000. In addition, another 15% of this age group had attended high school but failed to attain a diploma. Of the rest of those 25 years of age and up, 16.2% had some college; 6.3% had an Associate’s Degree; 11.0% had a Bachelor’s Degree; and 7.1% had a graduate or professional degree.

Table P-11 (below) compares Oconee County high school enrollment information that from other nearby South Carolina counties.

Table P-11

High School Attendance Data from Upstate South Carolina Counties: 1999-2000						
County	Total Enrollment (Grades 9-12)	Dropouts (Grades 9-12)		¹ Graduates (Spring 2000)		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent Entering ² Postsecondary	Percent Entering Gainful ³ Employment
Oconee	2,694	76	2.8	552	65.2	29.9
Abbeville	1,084	33	3.0	211	62.6	35.5
Anderson	7,310	268	3.7	1,383	70.9	22.8
Cherokee	2,257	74	3.3	353	65.2	30.9
Greenville	16,417	384	2.3	3,238	74.4	20.4
Greenwood	3,032	123	4.1	575	68.5	17.0
Laurens	2,542	34	1.3	479	51.4	40.5
Pickens	4,118	216	5.2	735	68.6	23.0
Spartanburg	10,949	236	2.2	2,066	65.7	21.7
Union	⁴ 1,316	45	3.4	237	61.6	27.4

¹Includes high school diploma and certificate recipients.

²Includes two- and four-year colleges/universities, technical and trade schools, business/commercial schools, beauty/barber colleges, and other schools offering educational programs beyond the high school level.

³Includes the armed services

⁴Incomplete Count

Source: South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics

Table P-11 shows that in 2000, only three other regional counties surpassed the 2.8 % drop out rate reported by Oconee County. Oconee County tied with Cherokee County for 6th place in the region with 65.2% of high school graduates entering some form of post-secondary education program. Finally, of the remaining graduates in 2000, Oconee County ranked fourth highest in the number entering some form of gainful employment in the fall. The 2010 Census will provide an update to this data

Income in Oconee County

Table P-12 (below) illustrates the rise of per capita personal income in Oconee County since 1980.

Table P-12

Per Capita Personal Income in Oconee County: 1980-2000				
Year	Per Capita Personal Income (\$)	Ranking in State	Percent of National Average (%)	Percent of State Average (%)
1980	7,612	17	75	98
1990	16,508	8	84	103
2000	24,978	7	84	103

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Though the income amounts are not adjusted for inflation, the table clearly shows that Oconee County's per capita personal income has steadily risen over the last two decades. In fact, by 2000 Oconee was ranked 7th in the state, having moved up 10 places in 20 years. The trend continued over the next year, for, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2001 Oconee County's per capita personal income had risen to \$26,169.

Retirement Income

Because Oconee County is home to a growing population of retirees, Social Security benefits and pensions are increasingly important to Oconee County's economic standing. Table P-14 (below) illustrates the percentage of Oconee's population receiving retirement benefits from Social Security, and the way that this compares to the rest of upstate South Carolina.

Table P-14

Retired Workers Receiving Social Security Benefits in Upstate South Carolina (1999)			
County	Total Population	Number Receiving Benefits	Percent of Total Population
Oconee	66,215	9,245	14.0
Abbeville	26,167	3,135	12.0
Anderson	165,740	20,140	12.2
Cherokee	52,537	5,540	10.5
Greenville	379,616	37,980	10.0
Greenwood	66,271	8,260	12.5
Laurens	69,567	7,275	10.5
Pickens	110,757	11,250	10.2
Spartanburg	253,791	27,025	10.6
Union	29,881	4,050	13.6

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration

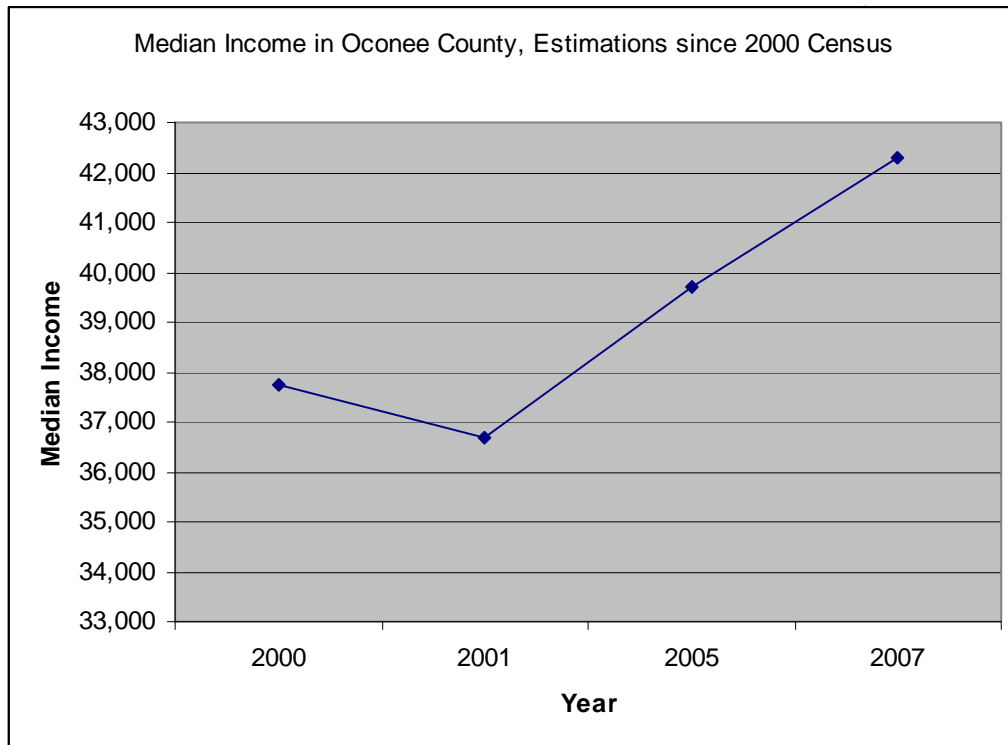
Oconee County led the upstate with 14.0% of its citizens receiving Social Security benefits as retired workers, while percentages in adjoining counties Pickens and Anderson trailed behind at 10.2% and 12.2%, respectively. Oconee County's percentage is also significantly higher than the state average (9.9%).

Median Income

Median income figures divide a population into two categories, one with an income below that of the median figure and one group with income above the median figure. Generally, the median income is considered a better measurement of wealth in a region than a simple average because it is less susceptible to extreme numbers on either end of the spectrum. The higher the median income is in an area, the greater the presence

of wealth throughout the region. With that said, having a high median income figure in an area does not exclude the area from pockets of poverty and economic distress. The Chart below shows the changes in median income of Oconee County since the 2000 Census. It should be noted that, although the estimations show an overall increase in median income during the period, the current economic situation is most likely to result in at least some negative impacts on future numbers.

Figure P-11



Source: US Census

Poverty Rate in Oconee County

According to the South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, Oconee County's poverty rate in 1979 (family of four persons earning less than \$7,412) ranked 3rd highest in the upstate, with 14.0% of its residents falling below the poverty line. By 1989, however, the number of Oconeeans living below the poverty line (family of four persons earning less than \$12,674) had significantly decreased, for the County's 11.4% rate was second lowest in the region, trailing only Greenville County. In fact, Oconee County was one of only four upstate counties that experienced a decrease in its poverty rate during the period. This decline continued throughout the next decade, for information from the Appalachian Regional Commission shows that Oconee County's poverty rate in 2000 (family of four persons earning less than \$17,603) had fallen to 10.8%, again only second to Greenville County's rate (10.5%).

Analysis

Both positive and negative changes have resulted from the strong growth in population experienced by Oconee County over the last several decades. Some of these changes are no different from those experienced all across the South; others, however, are unique to Oconee. The in-migration from other areas of the country, for example, is being seen throughout much of the southern United States as the “sunbelt” economy has expanded. Indeed, a significant portion of Oconee County’s increase in population has apparently stemmed from this migration. Not all of those coming to the County, however, have been drawn by the relocated industry and commercial activity.

To uncover the factors that initiated much of Oconee’s surge in population growth, it is necessary to look at what was occurring in the County at the time the changes began. As this element has shown, Oconee County’s population “boom” began in earnest during the 1970’s. At the time, Oconee and neighboring counties were undergoing dramatic economic changes, for the textile industry, after many decades of dominating the local employment scene, was beginning to wane. In addition, family farms, having traditionally played a vital role in the local economy, began to disappear at an increasing rate. As a result, a new attitude toward the recruitment of business began to take hold on both the state and local level. The active pursuit of economic development began to be taken seriously. Oconee County, with its mild climate, pristine natural resources, and hard-working population, soon began to enjoy the benefits of these efforts. Increasingly, newcomers began to call Oconee home. Along with the new business and industry locating in and around the area came individuals seeking to take advantage of the growing economy. In addition, it was also during this period that one of the most significant economic events in the history of Oconee County took place. The Duke Power Corporation, seeking to expand their electrical generating capacity, made a decision that eventually led to the investment of billions of dollars in the County. The lakes and electrical generating facilities that resulted from this decision forever changed Oconee, bringing jobs and opportunities that otherwise would not have been available. Now, more than ever before, Oconee became a magnet for not only jobseekers, but also those that had finished their careers.

The Duke Power Project, unlike the Corps of Engineers’ project that resulted in the creation of Lake Hartwell in the early 1960’s, significantly altered the economic course of Oconee County. Not only was the construction project a boon to the local economy, but, once completed, the new facilities provided a tremendous increase to the local tax base. As the lakes developed, thousands of people and millions of dollars were drawn into the region. This single decision, therefore, not only initiated significant development, but also acted as a catalyst that sparked the ancillary growth of talent and wealth from across the nation. As a result, the lives of all but very few Oconee County residents have been significantly impacted by the changes from this period. The development of the lakes has in turn brought new residents to the area and increased volunteerism in the schools, hospital, and civic organizations.

Of course, not all of the changes have been positive. Perhaps the most obvious problems arising from a dramatic increase in population are associated with population density and overcrowding. Formerly plentiful resources are suddenly overwhelmed, and

those that are of sufficient quantity suffer in quality. Pollution from litter, sewage, noise, lights, and any number of other sources drastically increases as people are forced closer together. Incompatible land use, an issue that was practically unheard of a few decades ago, has become a daily complaint. Long-time residents, looking for an explanation for the apparently new issues plaguing them, blame the newcomers. The new residents, suddenly realizing that life in their new home comes with unexpected problems, blame the “locals” for not having regulated the county better. “Us versus Them”, therefore, is a population issue that must be dealt with in an on-going manner if the bigger problems are to be successfully eradicated.

There is also the looming issue of a different type of growth that may become apparent in the next few years, for already, there are signs that the metropolitan areas to the north and south are converging on our area. A number of people live in Oconee County and work within the boundaries of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Due to our relatively low taxes, abundant acreage, and rural lifestyle, we should expect to attract attention from a number of developers seeking to create large numbers of homes for those seeking to escape the sprawling urban areas. Such has been the case with many other rural counties that found themselves adjacent to fast growing metro regions. Soon, of course, such formerly rural areas themselves became part of the urban landscape. If we are to avoid such a fate, we need to realize that this is a real potentiality, and begin to take steps to manage the coming changes in a way that we wish to be.

Population estimates show that the number of Oconee residents will continue to grow for many years to come. Along with this growth comes many opportunities; and with the proper attention by its leaders, future life in Oconee could be without compare. Reasonable, well-planned development that complements the area’s precious natural resources will accentuate the County’s growing prosperity. A successful economic development program will provide Oconee’s residents with steady, high-paying jobs, maintaining the trend of a strong local economy. Still, even under the best of conditions, some problems will arise, but those problems stemming from population growth can be overcome. Thoughtful, adequate regulations that not only address each of the issues, but also preempt the future problems, are therefore not only desirable, but necessary.

Future issues requiring local government attention will include matters not even considered an Oconee County problem a few years ago. As Oconee’s population gets older, for example, issues affecting the elderly will have to be dealt with by the local governments, for not every need will be met by state and federal actions. In addition, the increasing number of foreign-born individuals living in Oconee, both aliens and citizens, will raise the possibility of cultural and ideological friction. All Oconeeans, regardless of origin of birth, will need to be aware that the provocation of unnecessary conflicts can threaten the peace and prosperity of everyone. As Oconee County’s economy moves forward into the new century, efforts will need to be made to insure that every citizen has the opportunity to move forward with it. As high-tech industries assume the dominant position formerly held by the textile industry, for example, those individuals unprepared to deal with the new world will be left behind, increasing the burden on the rest of the population.

As this element shows, the population of Oconee County faces a bright future, but there is work to be done. The job will require close attention to issues before they develop into major problems. There is no doubt that dealing with the issues will

sometimes be unpleasant, but, by utilizing the tools and resources available in Oconee County, the benefits will outweigh the objectionable moments and provide Oconee's residents with a bright future.

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Population Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Population Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Initiate efforts to develop the foundation of a county stormwater management program prior to federal mandates, thereby allowing for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation possible in the event of designation.
2. Establish a program of managing both water quantity and water quality throughout the county that will ensure efficient utilization, and appropriate conservation, of our greatest natural resource.
3. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
4. Develop and implement an effective Capital Projects Program that provides the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County's citizens.
5. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
6. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
7. Continue to actively promote the recruitment of employment opportunities that provide the best lifestyle for all Oconee residents.
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.
11. Work to address the age-related problems that may arise among Oconee County's aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal efforts.
12. Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.

13. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed changes resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the rapid population growth of Oconee County.

14. Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.

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Natural Resources Element

Overview

This element examines Oconee County's natural resources, providing both an inventory and analysis of the benefits derived from various features. Among the resources considered are soils, topographic characteristics, plants, animals and their habitats, hydrology, unique recreational opportunities, and other natural assets influencing Oconee County. The results of the assessment will be used to project future trends and needs, which will in turn be addressed in goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County.

Since the adoption of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, the County has continued to work toward sustainability so that our valuable resources will be maintained for years to come. Citizens have grown more vocal in speaking out about the need to protect Oconee's environmental resources, which played a leading role in the conservation of Stumphouse Mountain, one of the greatest environmental success stories of the past few years. During this period, however, we have also faced tremendous challenges such as a serious drought, the potential withdrawal of 'our' water to support other sprawling metropolitan regions, and the ongoing pressure to develop sensitive lands. The areas water and sewer infrastructure is aging, which potentially can negatively impact the area's environment, if proper maintenance and upgrades do not occur. As never before, instead of sitting idly by, Oconee County's citizens have stepped up and begun to demand that government take action to manage these situations. Though the effort will be a long-term commitment, requiring continued review and adjustment far into the future, this element is intended to outline those critical actions needed to construct the foundations of those things needed to provide for the preservation of our most precious resources.

Defining Oconee County

Section 4-3-420 of the South Carolina State Code of Laws (2000) states "Oconee County is bounded as follows: on the north by the North Carolina line; on the east by Pickens County from which it is separated by a line beginning in the middle of Seneca River, where Ravenel's Bridge is located over said river (Survey Station No. 1, being the center-width and length of said bridge) thence S. 78° 10' E. 17.60 chains to corner, S. 37.5° E. 6.48 chains to corner, S. 64° 20' E. 4.92 chains to corner, N. 75° E. 8.06 chains to corner, S. 87° 35' E. 23.78 chains then the following courses and distances: S. 83° E. 9.16 chains, S. 72° 10' E.

6.00 chains, S. 54.75° E. 6.08 chains, S. 38.75° E. 1.43 chains, S. 31° E. 10.53 chains, to stone on east side of road near Agricultural Hall, thence S. 72° 50' E. 5.10 chains to corner, N. 85° 25' E. 20.17 chains to corner, N. 89° E. 15.13 chains to corner, N. 84° E. 9.13 chains, S. 76° E. 14.40 chains, S. 61° E. 4.86 chains, S. 33.5° E. 11.86 chains, S. 50° 20' E. 34.96 chains, S. 56.5° E. 21.15 chains, S. 62.25° E. 8.86 chains, S. 43.5° E. 11.44 chains, S. 37° E. 18.45 chains, S. 64.25° E. 19.40 chains, to corner in center of top-soil highway on the Anderson County line. Said corner being N. 65.5° W. 4.81 chains from the northwest corner of cement bridge over Eighteen Mile Creek. It is the intent of this section to establish the new top-soil highway as the boundary of Pickens and Oconee Counties. It is bounded on the south by Anderson County, from which it is separated by a line, commencing at the mouth of Cane Creek on Tugaloo River and running thence along the line which originally separated Anderson and Pickens districts to its point of intersection with the public road leading from Ravenel's Bridge to Pendleton Village; on the west and northwest by the state of Georgia, from which it is separated by the Tugaloo and Chatooga Rivers.” The total area encompassed by Oconee’s borders is approximately 670 square miles (432,227 acres).

Climate

Located at the edge of the southern Appalachian Mountains, Oconee County is blessed with a climate that offers its residents four distinct seasons. Summers, though typically warm, usually offer only occasional periods of hot weather. Winters, as well, are generally mild, with extremely cold weather limited to relatively short episodes. Spring and autumn provide Oconee with pleasant days that have served as a beacon to thousands from other regions looking for a mild climate and relaxed lifestyle. In general, “South Carolina has a warm, moderate climate with hot, humid summers.”

Rainfall records kept since 1895 show the statewide average rainfall is near 48 inches, although it has ranged from 32 to 70 inches.”¹ The South Carolina State Climatology Office is an excellent resource on statistical data for the State and region. The following table shows some of the weather characteristics of the county.

Table NR-1

Oconee County’s Climate (1948-2008)

Highest Maximum Temperature	106° F (August 17, 1954)
Lowest Minimum Temperature	-5° F (January 21, 1985)
Annual Average Maximum Temperature	72.1° F
Annual Average Minimum Temperature	47.0° F
Annual Average Mean Temperature	59.4° F
Highest Daily Rainfall	6.93 inches (May 29, 1976)
Annual Average Rainfall	87.07 inches
Wettest Year	110.79 inches (1994)
Driest Year	33.97 inches (1970)
Mean Snowfall	5.1 inches

Source: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, State Climatology Office

¹ SC Department of Natural Resources. “The South Carolina Drought Response Program”.

One of the benefits of Oconee’s climate is a relatively long growing season, which allows for the successful production of a large number of crops. The county lies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Plant Hardiness Zone 7a. Table NR-2 illustrates the dates of the first and last freezing temperatures in Oconee based on data gathered at Walhalla between 1961 and 1990.

Table NR-2

Probability	Temperature		
Last freezing temperature in spring:	24°F or lower	28° F or lower	32° or lower
1 year in 10 later than--	April 5	April 20	May 4
2 year in 10 later than--	March 30	April 14	April 29
5 year in 10 later than--	March 19	April 4	April 20
First freezing temperature in fall:			
1 year in 10 earlier than--	November 1	October 15	October 5
2 year in 10 earlier than--	November 5	October 21	October 10
5 year in 10 earlier than--	November 15	November 2	October 20

Source: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, State Climatology Office

In spite of Oconee County’s temperate climate, extreme weather events do occur, occasionally taking the form of tornados. Although most Oconee tornados are relatively small, property damage and personal injuries do occur. According to information from the U.S. National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration’s National Climatic Data Center, nineteen tornados were detected in Oconee County between 1973 and 2003, which equates to an average of one tornadic event every one and a half years. As this is this is just an average, however, it should be noted that much longer periods of time regularly elapse without any tornadic activity; of course, in a few cases, a single series of storms have produced multiple tornados on a single day. Table NR-3 below illustrates recorded tornado activity in Oconee County between January 1, 1993 and December 31, 2000.

Table NR-3

Recorded Tornado Activity in Oconee County, 01/01/1993 – 12/31/2000				
Location	Date	*Magnitude	Injuries	Est. Property Damage
Oconee (no specific location)	02/10/1990	F1	1	\$250,000
Westminster	03/23/1993	F0	0	\$1,000
Long Creek to Pickett Post	03/27/1994	F3	12	\$5,000,000
Pickett Post	06/26/1994	F2	0	\$500,000
Fair Play	01/14/1995	F1	0	\$5,000
Tokenna Crossroads	09/16/1996	F1	0	\$200,000
Westminster	02/21/1997	F0	0	\$5,000
Walhalla	05/07/1998	F0	0	0
Oakway	05/07/1998	F0	0	\$5,000
Tokenna Crossroads	10/04/1999	F0	0	0
Westminster	06/16/2000	F0	0	\$5,000
Walhalla	06/16/2000	Funnel Cloud	0	0
Tamassee	06/16/2000	F0	0	0

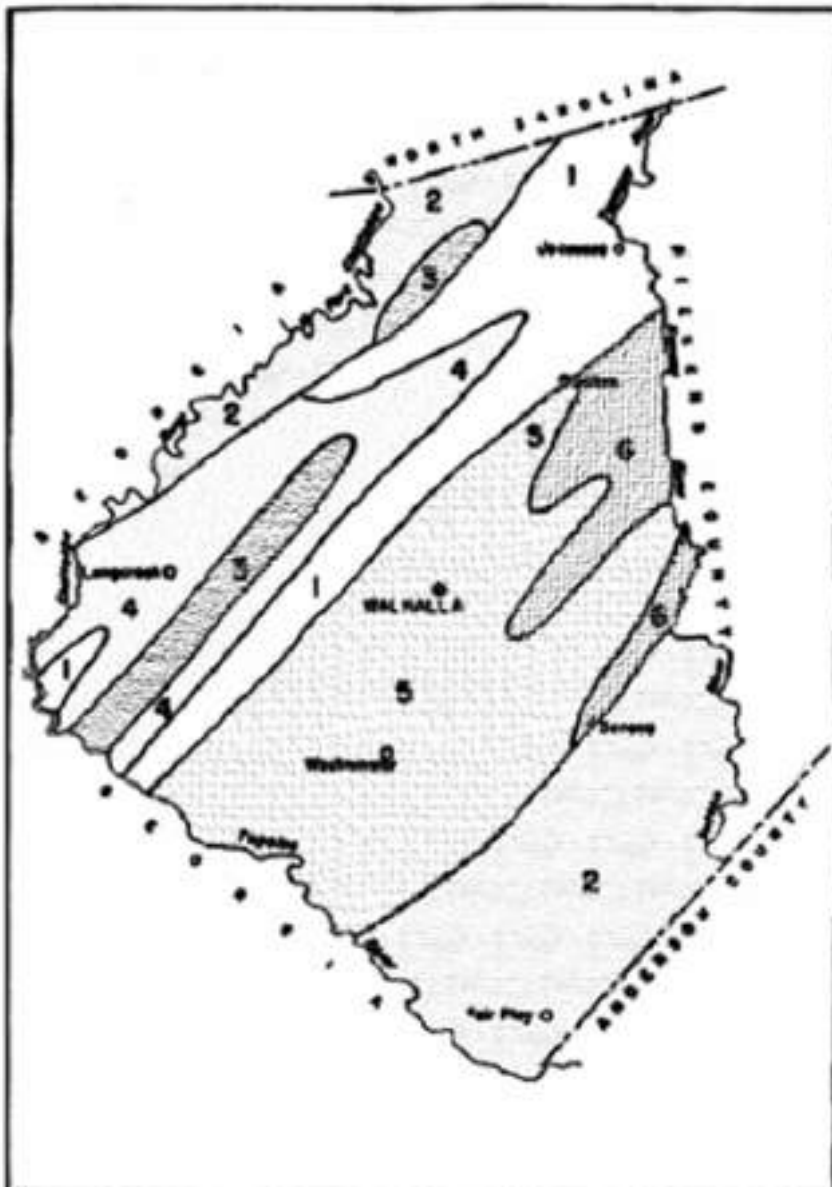
*Manitude measured by Fujita-Pearson Scale (F0 = 0-72mph windspeed; F1 = 73-112mph windspeed; F2 = 113-157mph windspeed; F3 = 158-206mph windspeed; F4 = 207-260mph windspeed; F5 = 261+ windspeed)

Source: U.S. National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center

Though tornadoes are viewed as perhaps the most extreme climatological threat to Oconee County residents, a number of other threatening weather events commonly occur. According to weather records, Oconee County experienced 57 thunderstorms with winds exceeding 60 miles per hour between 1948 and 2000; 66 hail storms between 1959 and 2000; 35 floods between 1975 and 1995; 59 ice, sleet or snow events between 1975 and 1995; and 552 wildfires (accounting for 2,164 acres burned) between 1975 and 1995. (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, State Climatology Office)

Geology

Figure NR-1 Geologic Map of Oconee County



1. Mylonitized granite gneiss and hornblende gneiss
2. Oligoclase-biotite schist
3. Cockeysville marble, Setters formation, and associated volcanic rocks
4. Albite-chlorite schist and garnetiferous phyllonite
5. Wissahickon schist with igneous injection
6. Granite, gabbro, and hornblende gneiss.

Source: USDA Soil Survey of Oconee County;
 (Shading by Oconee County Planning Department to enhance definition.)

Oconee County's underlying bedrock is composed of a series of metamorphic and metasedimentary rocks traversed by a series of igneous intrusions. At the beginning of the Paleozoic era, the region was below sea level, leading to the accumulation of deposits of sand, gravel, silt and limestone. During the late Paleozoic, granite intruded into the schists, gneisses, and slates. At the end of the period, tremendous upheaval occurred, leading to significant folding, faulting, and brecciation. The result of such metamorphism is that in modern times it is sometimes impossible to determine if the original rocks were sedimentary or igneous. (USDA Soil Survey of Oconee County)

The soils in Oconee County resulted from the weathering of, among others, schistose and gneissoid granite, diorite, and volcanic rock. Batholiths, sills, dikes, and surface flows are generally composed of granite, pyroxenite, peridotite, porphyrite, diorite, diabase and gabbro. The northwestern areas of the county are host of outcroppings made up of oligoclase-biotite schist, albite-chlorite schist, and similar rock.

Mylonitized granite gneiss and hornblende gneiss can also be found in northwestern Oconee. Granites in Oconee are composed of various textured materials ranging from crystalline to porphyritic. While some are likely of Precambrian age, others may be Carboniferous. The granites have been classified as being mixtures of quartz, feldspar and biotite. Deposits of the following materials have been located in Oconee: gold, silver-lead, corundum, tremolite, talc, soapstone, asbestos, graphite, feldspar, mica, granite-gneiss, granite, limestone, and marble. (USDA Soil Survey of Oconee County)

Radon, a known carcinogen, has been found in Oconee County. This gas, which may be found in soil, rocks, water, and air, results from the radioactive breakdown of uranium. As radon presents a potential health risk to all those contacting it, experts are particularly concerned about the infiltration of the gas into homes. Additionally, in recent years concerns have been raised about levels of radon found in local residential wells. Because surface water in streams and lakes is exposed to air, much of the gas is dissipated before being contacted by humans. Groundwater supplying wells, however, retains much of the radon. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified Oconee County as having a moderate potential (from 2 to 4 picocuries per liter [pCi/L]) for the presence of radon. However, some homes have tested at levels exceeding 20 picocuries per liter! According to EPA, specific effects on individuals vary with personal health, time of exposure, quantity of exposure, and other factors. In addition, the level of potential assigned to a particular area does not indicate the level of radon to be found in any given location within that area. Because there is no way to predict accurately the level of radon in specific locations, the EPA recommends that each home be tested individually. To guard against infiltration of the gas into homes, relatively inexpensive measures should be taken at the time of construction. For retrofitting existing structures, however, more costly methods must be employed.

Soils

Although Oconee County's recent economic history has been a tale of increased industrialization and commercialization, the area's traditional lifestyle, not unlike many other areas of the southern United States, was based on agriculture. For generations, therefore, Oconee's soils played a direct role in the lives of almost all county residents. Yet, as was the case in other similar areas, early agricultural practices damaged the area's soils, leaving many fields eroded and streams full of sediment. Today, of course, modern agricultural and conservation methods implement best management practices, and many of the damaged areas have been successfully reclaimed. As a result, Oconee County farmers are able to not only obtain yields unimaginable to their predecessors, but also maintain the health of the source of their prosperity.

In 1958, the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), published the results of a soil survey that identified, located, categorized, and mapped all of Oconee County's soils. Soil scientists traveled throughout the county cataloging, in addition to soil types, slopes, streams, plants, agricultural operations, and other items directly impacted by soils. The gathered data was then compared to similar information from other areas, thereby allowing Oconee's soils to be classified and named according to standard procedures. When completed, the information was combined and published as the Soil Survey of Oconee County, South Carolina.

Table NR-4 lists the soil series of Oconee County, along with the range of slope, acreage and percentage of total area that each soil comprises.

Table NR-4

Soil Series in Oconee County				
Soil	Slope Range (%)	Acres	Total Area (%)	*Suitability for Drainfields
Altavista sandy loam	0-6	371	0.1	Sv
Appling sandy loam	2-6	684	0.2	M
Appling sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	503	0.1	M
Appling sandy loam	6-10	675	0.2	M
Appling sandy loam	10-15	247	0.1	M
Appling sandy loam	15-30	434	0.1	Sv
Ashe sandy loam	25-30	1,794	0.4	Sv
Buncombe loamy sand	---	475	0.1	Sv
Cecil sandy loam	2-6	1,397	0.3	M
Cecil sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	14,061	3.3	M
Cecil sandy loam	6-10	1,358	0.3	M
Cecil sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	19,694	4.6	M
Cecil sandy loam	10-15	1,932	0.4	M
Cecil sandy loam (eroded)	10-15	9,767	2.3	M
Cecil sandy loam	15-25	9,213	2.1	Sv
Cecil sandy loam (eroded)	15-25	8,414	2.0	Sv
Cecil sandy loam	25-35	3,220	0.7	Sv
Cecil sandy loam (eroded)	25-35	2,112	0.5	Sv
Cecil clay loam (severely eroded)	2-6	716	0.2	M
Cecil clay loam (severely eroded)	6-10	4,356	1.0	M
Cecil clay loam (severely eroded)	10-15	9,148	2.1	M
Cecil clay loam (severely eroded)	15-25	15,422	3.6	Sv
Chewalca silt loam	---	3,013	0.7	Sv
Congaree fine sandy loam	---	3,399	0.8	Sv
Congaree silt loam	---	2,670	0.6	Sv
Davidson loam (eroded)	2-6	277	0.1	M

Gullied land (rolling)	---	449	0.1	M
Gullied land (hilly)	---	8,447	2.0	Sv
Halewood fine sandy loam	2-6	575	0.1	Sl
Halewood fine sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	1,422	0.3	M
Halewood fine sandy loam	10-15	815	0.2	M
Halewood fine sandy loam (eroded)	10-15	768	0.2	M
Halewood fine sandy loam	15-25	3,223	0.7	Sv
Halewood fine sandy loam (eroded)	15-25	917	0.2	Sv
Halewood fine sandy loam	25-45	38,559	9.0	Sv
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams	2-6	1,072	0.2	M
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams	6-10	1,756	0.4	M
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams (eroded)	6-10	5,003	1.2	M
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams	10-15	3,251	0.8	M
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams (eroded)	10-15	6,819	1.6	M
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams	15-25	21,529	5.0	Sv
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams (eroded)	15-25	10,352	2.4	Sv
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams	25-45	55,642	13.0	Sv
Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams (eroded)	25-45	1,540	0.4	Sv
Hayesville and Cecil loams (severely eroded)	6-10	415	0.1	M
Hayesville and Cecil loams (severely eroded)	10-15	738	0.2	M
Hayesville and Cecil loams (severely eroded)	15-45	4,252	1.0	Sv
Hayesville, Cecil, and Halewood sandy loams (shallow)	15-25	449	0.1	Sv
Hayesville, Cecil, and Halewood sandy loams (shallow)	25-60	7,298	1.7	Sv
Hiawassee sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	392	0.1	M
Hiawassee sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	409	0.1	M
Hiawassee sandy loam (eroded)	15-25	292	0.1	Sv
Hiawassee clay loam (severely eroded)	10-15	360	0.1	M
Lloyd sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	7,954	1.8	M
Lloyd sandy loam	6-10	572	0.1	M
Lloyd sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	8,996	2.1	M
Lloyd sandy loam (eroded)	10-15	5,824	1.4	M
Lloyd sandy loam (eroded)	15-25	14,661	3.4	Sv
Lloyd sandy loam	25-35	7,647	1.8	Sv
Lloyd clay loam (severely eroded)	2-6	360	0.1	M
Lloyd clay loam (severely eroded)	6-10	4,093	0.9	M
Lloyd clay loam (severely eroded)	10-15	5,711	1.3	M
Lloyd clay loam (severely eroded)	15-35	8,891	2.1	Sv
Lloyd loam (moderately shallow- eroded)	15-25	402	0.1	Sv
Lloyd loam (moderately shallow)	25-40	734	0.2	Sv
Local alluvial land	---	1,729	0.4	Sv
Madison fine sandy loam, high	2-6	156	<0.1	Sl
Madison fine sandy loam, high	6-10	562	0.1	M
Madison fine sandy loam, high (eroded)	6-10	1,193	0.3	M
Madison fine sandy loam, high	10-15	1,129	0.3	M
Madison fine sandy loam, high (eroded)	10-15	1,620	0.4	M
Madison fine sandy loam, high	15-25	2,694	0.6	Sv
Madison fine sandy loam, high (eroded)	15-25	1,565	0.4	Sv
Madison fine sandy loam, high	25-40	10,206	2.4	Sv
Madison fine sandy loam, high (severely eroded)	15-25	336	0.1	Sv
Madison sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	136	<0.1	M
Madison sandy loam (eroded)	10-15	174	<0.1	M
Madison sandy loam (eroded)	15-30	386	0.1	Sv
Mixed alluvial land	---	11,694	2.7	Sv
Mixed wet alluvial land	---	3,189	0.7	Sv
Porters loam	25-45	2,071	0.5	Sv
Porters stony loam	25-45	1,188	0.3	Sv
State fine sandy loam	---	334	0.1	M
Stony land	---	377	0.1	Sv
Talladega and Chandler loams	10-25	625	0.1	Sv
Talladega and Chandler loams	25-60	23,995	5.6	Sv
Watauga fine sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	109	<0.1	M
Watauga fine sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	81	<0.1	M
Watauga fine sandy loam (eroded)	10-25	138	<0.1	Sv
Watauga fine sandy loam	25-40	293	0.1	Sv

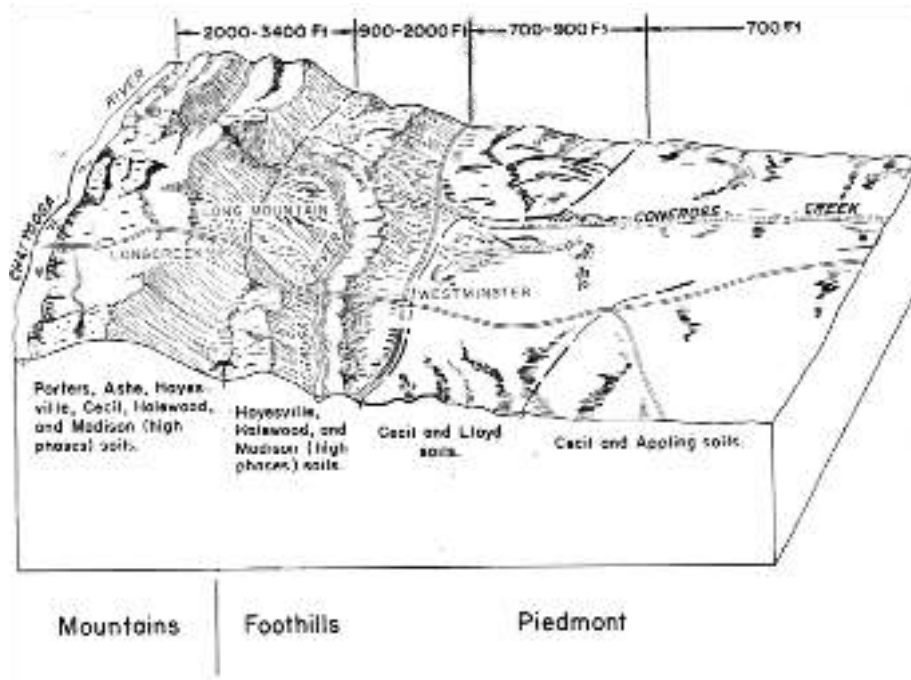
Wickham sandy loam	2-6	472	0.1	M
Wickham sandy loam (eroded)	2-6	1,713	0.4	M
Wickham sandy loam (eroded)	6-10	681	0.2	M
Wickham sandy loam (eroded)	10-15	429	0.1	M
Wickham sandy loam (eroded)	15-25	260	0.1	Sv
Wickham clay loam (severely eroded)	6-10	282	0.1	M
Worsham sandy loam	0-6	934	0.2	Sv
Worsham sandy loam (eroded)	6-15	108	<0.1	M

* Limitations for septic system drainfield taken from Sanitary Facilities suitability report for all Oconee County soils, NRCS
S = Slight Limitations; M = Moderate Limitations; Sv = Severe Limitations
Source: Soil Survey Report for Oconee County; "Sanitary Facilities: All Oconee Soil", USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (3/18/1999)

Twenty-three series of soils are found in Oconee County. The distribution of soils ranges from Cecil, Appling, and Lloyd soils in the Piedmont Plateau; to the Hayesville, Halewood and Madison soils in the foothills and mountains. While some soils are only found in small quantities, sometimes accounting for only a few acres across the entire county, a few make up tens of thousands of acres. Also, each area of the county offers differing, sometimes unique, combinations of soils that change with varying topography, greatly impacting suitability for various land uses in particular locations. For example, Hayesville and Cecil fine sandy loams in areas with 2-6% slopes are only moderately limited in suitability for septic tank absorption fields. Yet, with the same soils on slopes greater than 15%, absorption is severely limited. Other factors influencing suitability for particular land uses include organic matter content, permeability, and depth. The Soil Survey of Oconee County provides more details on soils in Oconee County for those wishing more information.

Figure NR-2 illustrates the general division of soil series related to the county's physiography, showing the regions where much of the major soils can be found.

Figure NR-2



Source: Soil Survey of Oconee County

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District is a locally elected board which relies on the technical assistance of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resources Conservation Service to promote the conservation of natural resources in the county. Their input on the subject of soils is invaluable and all efforts to help preserve our resources in soil should be coordinated with the District.

One of the areas that has been overlooked as a threatened resource in recent decades is soil. Historically, soil erosion was elevated to a national crisis in the Depression, which resulted in the formation of the Soil Erosion Service (now the NRCS) and local Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The marriage of the US Department of Agriculture with local governing bodies (by county) enabled soil loss to be swiftly abated through installation of conservation practices such as contour farming, terracing, crop residue management, crop rotation, grassed waterways, and field borders. Massive soil erosion was curtailed with the incorporation of these practices in typical farm operations. Movement away from agriculture throughout the decades following the 1930's resulted in the conversion of cropland to permanent sod, trees, and other uses. Thus, the awareness of the need to conserve soil and prevent erosion has taken a back seat to water quality.

If soil erosion were as obvious today as it was during the 1930's, efforts to protect and conserve this resource would be equal to or greater than efforts to preserve water quality. It takes hundreds, even thousands, of years to create one inch of soil. With that in mind, we need to consider the following facts:

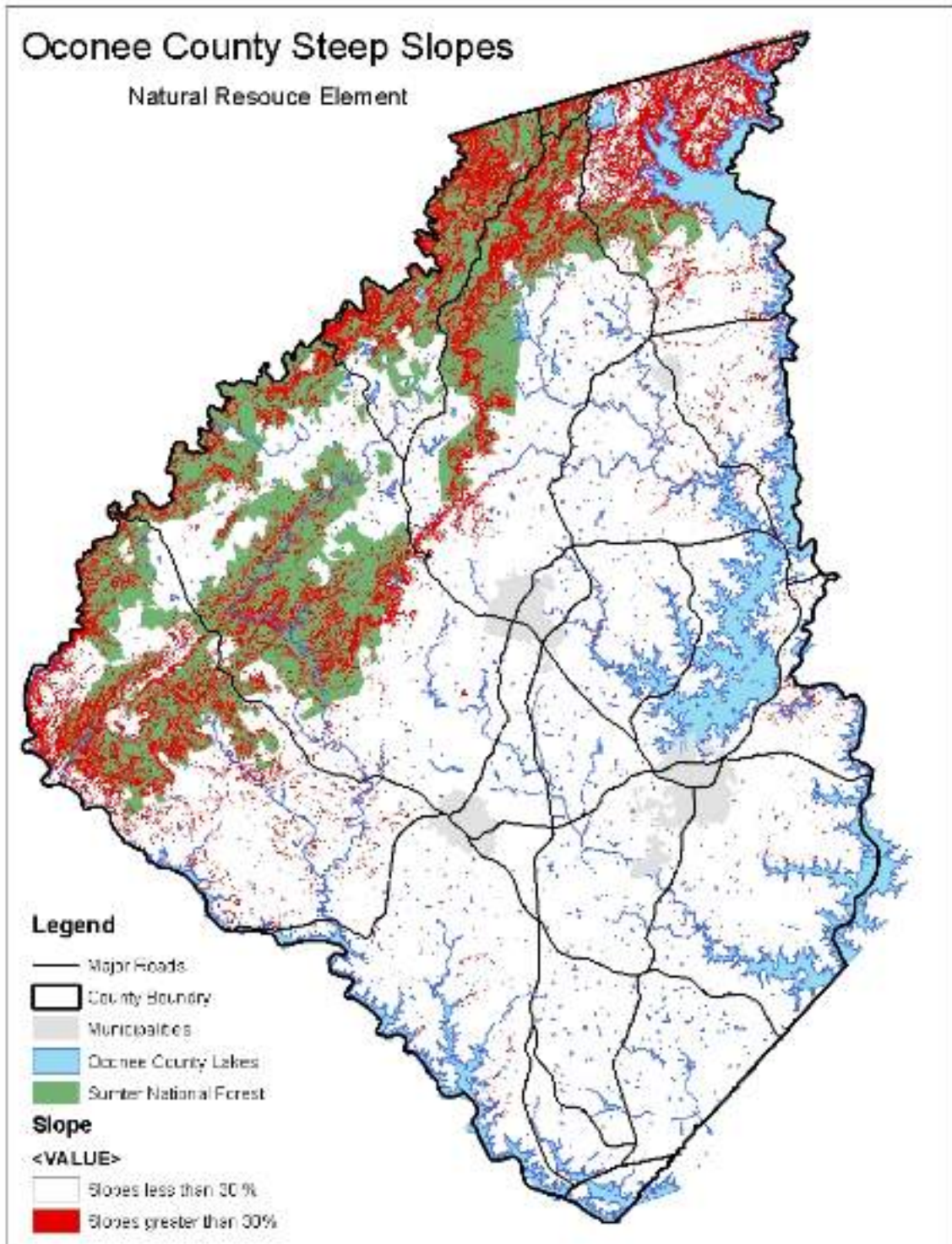
1. Without considering the United States Forest Service lands, there are 98 different soils found in Oconee County.
2. Of these, 41 are found to be “prime” or “of statewide importance” (soils most suitable for agricultural production)
3. The 41 different soils make up only 21% of the County’s soil resources.
4. The above mentioned acreage falls mostly in the agricultural community in the southern end of the county

A USDA technical bulletin states that prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, and oilseed crops. It has the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops in an economic manner if it is treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks.² Not only should the county look at protecting these prime farmlands from development but efforts to promote best farm practices which promote soil regeneration should be held in similar regard.

The loss of soils is also closely tied to the slope of the land. When steep slopes are encountered, developers should adhere to best development practices. Cleared land combined with steep slopes will result in rapid erosion, which leads to the sedimentation of creeks, rivers, and lakes. Barren steep slope areas also have the potential to have a negative affect on the neighboring properties due to runoff problems. Oconee County has been blessed with breath taking mountain views and river valleys but this blessing also brings with it a number of areas that need to be developed very cautiously. It would be preferable to limit the development on steep slopes and to protect the vegetation on those areas. Minimal disturbance to natural vegetation helps to prevent storm water runoff and maintain the integrity of the soil in the area in question. Another negative effect of the failure to follow best management development practices is the increasing siltation in the areas lakes. In fact, the delta areas of feeders like Cane Creek, Little Cane Creek, and Crooked Creeks have undergone tremendous siltation in recent years, resulting in the continual decline in the navigability of the waterways. The loss of soils, due to runoff, not only impairs the land but also the areas water resources. Strong measures should be undertaken on a state and local level to promote best management of development sites. The following map depicts those areas in Oconee County that have slopes greater than thirty (30%) percent. Due to the scale of the map, not all areas may be visible.

² Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA. §657.5, 7CRF Ch. VI (1-1-100 Edition), pg 724.

Figure NR-3



Terrain

Oconee County is a region of diverse terrain separated into three distinct physiographic areas. The Piedmont Plateau area, which lies predominantly in the southern part of the county, accounts for about 42% of total county acreage, and averages about 690 feet above mean sea level

(Soil Survey of Oconee County). Given the availability of easily farmable tracts of land in this region, it has traditionally been the location of most of the intensive row cropping operations in the county, and as such is the site of the majority of the county's remaining prime agricultural lands.

The foothills region of Oconee lies in a band running from southwest to northeast, separating the Blue Ridge Mountains in the north and the Piedmont Plateau in the south. The foothills comprise about 35% of the county, and range in elevation from 780 feet to 2,200 feet above mean sea level (Soil Survey of Oconee County).

Because the wide range in elevation includes many areas of severely steep slopes and thinner soils, farming activities have traditionally been more limited than those in the Piedmont Plateau region.

The last of the three physiographic regions makes up approximately 23% of Oconee County, and lies in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Extending in a band lying west and north of the foothills region, the Blue Ridge Mountains are part of the southern Appalachian Mountain chain. With elevations that range from 2,200 feet to 3,400 feet above mean sea level, the



terrain in this area of Oconee is often extremely steep and difficult to access (Soil Survey of Oconee County).

Conservation and Land Preservation Efforts

The citizens of Oconee County are increasingly expressing a unified desire to preserve the unique characteristics of the region. The 2008 Oconee by Choice Plan, produced as the result of a countywide visioning plan, states: “Citizens want to ensure their community remains “a place where nature is respected not exploited.” Therefore, as we move forward in the discussion of how to protect our natural resources, issues surrounding water, soils, and agricultural preservation will remain at the forefront for years to come. A key aspect of this discussion, however, will need to be the establishment of a balance between the individual’s desire and the public’s need. While natural resources are a major part of what makes life in Oconee County so special, so is the acceptance and love of individual freedoms. Retaining one without consideration of the other would be unacceptable.

The preservation of natural resources for future generations can be achieved through both government protection and public/private partnerships. Perhaps the most obvious example of governmental action preserving forestland is Sumter National Forest, which comprises a large portion of the northwestern part of the county. Going forward, when appropriate, governments should continue to act as necessary to preserve precious land resources. In recent years, however, there has been a growing trend to establish public/private partnerships to preserve lands. The Stumphouse Mountain preservation effort stands as a prime example that received broad-based citizen support. Therefore, Oconee County should take the lead in facilitating such efforts, whether through the creation of a conservation bank or other measure, establishing itself as the model for local governments determined to preserve their most important natural resources.

Although much attention is given to the conservation of sensitive and pristine areas, another major priority for Oconee citizens to consider is the conservation of prime agricultural lands. With increasing demands placed on farms by development pressure, farm owners are starting to consider how they may protect their farmland. The South Carolina Legislature passed the Right to Farm Law, which “gives existing farms some protection from nuisance complaints. Its purpose is to lessen the loss of farmland caused by common law nuisance actions that arise when nonagricultural land uses expand into agricultural lands.”³ The protections provided by the Right to Farm Law protect the farm operations from lawsuits but it does not protect land from being developed into other uses. True protection of land can be achieved through such mechanisms as land trusts, development rights, and good estate planning. The following map shows those areas in the county that are currently protected under a conservation easement of some kind.

³ “South Carolina Agricultural Landowners Guide.” American Land Trust.

Figure NR-6

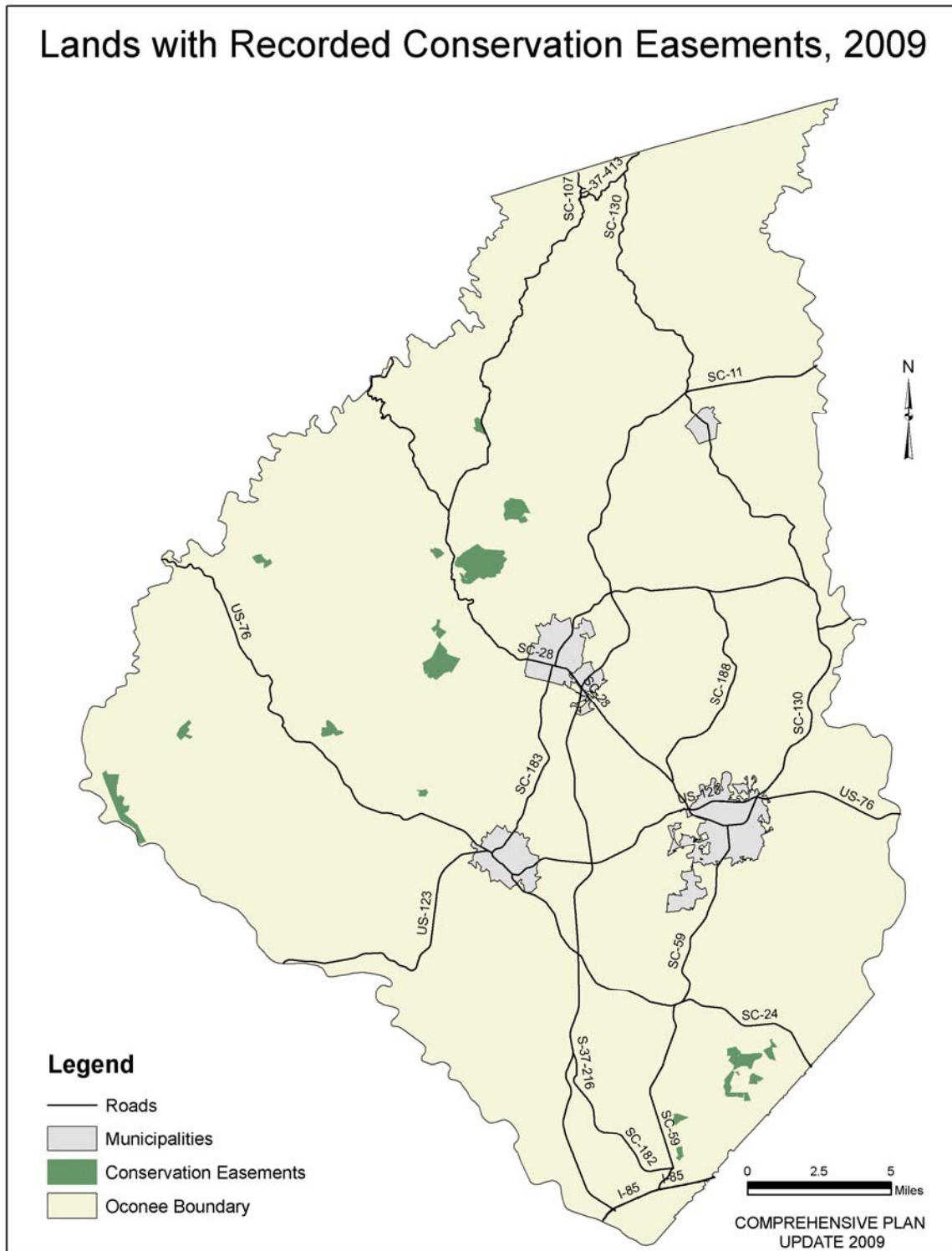


Table NR-5 (below) contains an overview of conservation types as put forth in the South Carolina Agricultural Landowners Guide.

Table NR-5

Conservation Type	Summary
Agricultural Conservation Easements	“An agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary deed restriction that landowners willingly place on their land. It permanently limits subdivision and non-agricultural development.”
Conservation Bank	“Signed into law in 2002, the South Carolina Conservation Bank provides funding for protection of natural resources through the conservation of land across the State.”
Estate Planning	“Good estate planning accomplishes at least four goals: transferring ownership and management of the agricultural operation, land and other assets; avoiding unnecessary income, gift, and estate taxes; ensuring financial security and peace of mind for all generations; and developing the next generation’s management capacity.”
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	This program “is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide matching funds to help purchase agricultural conservation easements on productive farm and ranch lands. . . To qualify, landowners must work with state and local governments or non-governmental entities to secure a pending offer with funding at least equal to 50 percent of the land’s fair market easement value.”
Forest Legacy Program	This program was established in the 1990 farm bill and is administered by the USDA Forest Service and the SCDNR. Funds are used to purchase conservation easements on working forestland threatened by conversion to non-forested uses. This program is limited to private forest landowners who have prepared a multiple resource management plan.
Grassland Reserve Program	The 2002 Farm Bill authorized this program. Private lands of 40 or more contiguous acres historically dominated by grasses or shrubs are eligible for the program. The land should have livestock currently grazing. Landowners with eligible property may receive compensation through permanent or 30 year easements, or enter into a 10, 15, 20, or 30 year rental agreement.
Small Farms Program	“The South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Small Farms Program provides assistance to small family farmers. Special importance is placed on farmer owned marketing cooperatives; land retention, alternative land use and community development. The program also provides assistance with identifying and securing financial resources and locating profitable markets.”
Conservation Reserve Program	This program is administered by the Farm Service Agency to encourage farmers to convert highly erodible cropland and other environmentally sensitive land to vegetative cover. Landowners may also receive funding to fence streams that exclude livestock and to build grass waterways. Eligible land must have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher and been planted to an agricultural commodity four of the six previous years.
Conservation Security Program	This program was established in the 2002 Farm Bill to provide financial and technical assistance to support conservation efforts on tribal and private agricultural land. All privately owned land that meets established soil and water quality criteria is eligible.

In addition to the above resources, the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences at Clemson University has developed a series of web-based videos that walk landowners through all aspects of Conservation Easements. Local Extension Offices are also valuable resources for the public and individuals interested in placing some protections on their land should utilize this resource. The videos can be found at:

http://www.clemson.edu/cafls/departments/forestry/conservation_easements/index.html .

Oconee County should also work to establish a local conservation bank to help preserve and protect not only the area's natural resources, but also those historical and cultural resources that are valuable links to the past. By providing for the creation of a fund that could assist in the purchase of conservation easements, as well as an administrative structure that could assist residents in exploring the advantages and disadvantages of having property conserved, a local bank would be an asset to all citizens of Oconee County.

In the future, Oconee County should also move to develop a program to allow for the transfer of development rights. As a tool, transferring development rights consists of a conveyance of development rights by deed, easement, or other legal instrument, authorized by ordinance or regulation, to another parcel of land and the recording of that conveyance.⁴ Programs establishing a mechanism for the transfer of development rights operate by preserving land in one area, in exchange for permitting increased development density in other areas of the jurisdiction. Currently, a program is impractical for Oconee County, but it should be considered as a goal to be developed as the county's land use program matures.

Water Resources

Although Oconee County possesses a wide variety of natural resources, water resources have traditionally set the county apart from our neighbors. From the farmlands in the south, to the mountains in the north, area residents have never been very far from one of the county's streams. In fact, all but a short length of the county's boundaries are marked by water. With an average annual precipitation ranked near the top of the nation, and a geology that favors water storage, it was perhaps inevitable that the resource played a major role in shaping the county, as we know it today. It should be stressed, however, that though plentiful, Oconee County's supply of water has limits.

Widespread concern about future water availability was brought to the fore by events that began in the late 1990's, which happened to be a sustained period of diminished rainfall. As drought increased, lake and stream levels fell to near-record lows, and a number of residents reported that wells were drying up. At the same time, it became known that large metropolitan areas in the region were actively seeking to permit the withdrawal of local surface waters to supply their own growing needs. Federal and State authorities ultimately control the issue but local leaders believe that further stressing Oconee County's reservoirs will inevitably limit the county's ability to chart its own future growth. Another concern noted during the period was the existence of uranium, in the form the radon, in Oconee's groundwater. Radon is potentially a serious problem, however it is a very localized condition that may be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Finally, Oconee's waters have been affected by increasing pressure from non-point source pollution resulting from poor agricultural

⁴ Freilich, Robert H. and S. Mark White. *21st Century Land Development Code*. Chicago, Illinois: American Planning Association. 2008.

practices, development, and increased population density. These factors, combined with a population that grew in excess of 15% during the 1990's, have made insuring sufficient water supplies for both consumption and use in economic development a major concern in Oconee County.

Groundwater

While the groundwater in Oconee County is generally unconfined, local artesian conditions exist when wells penetrate fractures that are hydraulically linked with higher recharge areas. Clayey Regolith that forms a confining unit may also create artesian situations. Typically, water enters the ground, percolating vertically downward through unsaturated materials. Once the water reaches a level of saturation, which is the water table, it moves laterally to seek a point of discharge. This is the source of springs, seeps, base flow to streams, and seepage to lakes. While the water table may be near the surface in valleys or lowlands, it can be tens to hundreds of feet below the surface of hills and mountains. (Groundwater Atlas of the United States, USGS)

Contrary to popular belief, most groundwater does not flow through underground streams, but seeps through layers of sand or cracked rocks. Because the water moves so slowly, it does not dilute or flush out pollutants very easily. Until the water reaches a well or emerges in a body of surface water, detecting pollution is extremely difficult; and by that time, remediation is both problematic and expensive. (Bureau of Water, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control [DHEC])

The replenishment of groundwater supplies is an issue that must be dealt with in all developing areas, including Oconee County. As the amount of impervious surface increases, the amount of area available for recharging the groundwater system is decreased. Buildings, driveways, and paved roads all prevent rainwater from finding its way back into the ground. At the same time, water turned back from these structures greatly increases the amount of runoff that must be dealt with downstream, leading to increased amounts of flooding and property damage. In addition, damage to wetland areas, which also serve as key recharge areas, removes even more groundwater from the system, thereby further reducing the water available to supply new development.

Although pollutants are an increasing threat, the quality of raw groundwater in Oconee and the surrounding region has traditionally been considered suitable for drinking and other uses. Although fluoride, iron, manganese, and some sulfate can be found in the water, levels have rarely exceeded state and federal drinking-water standards (Groundwater Atlas of the United States, USGS).

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service indicate that great strides have been made in the protection and improvement of water quality as compared to previous decades. Federal and State cost share programs and grants encourage the implementation of conservation practices, which protect water such as livestock exclusion from natural water bodies, the maintenance of natural vegetative buffers along stream corridors, and appropriate application and timing of nutrients and pesticides in agricultural fields. Water quality and water conservation practices will continue to receive emphasis in technical and financial assistance programs, because the demand for clean, reliable sources of water will increase as the population increases. Since

the misuse and pollution of water is easily observable, insuring the protection of water will remain at the forefront of public concern.

Streams and Lakes

The waters of many streams and lakes flow through Oconee County. The following is a list of some of the county's significant waters.

- 1) Lake Hartwell- Created by the impoundment of the Savannah River on the South Carolina/ Georgia border, this 56,000-acre body of water is one of the most popular recreational lakes in the United States. Lake Hartwell was completed in the early 1960's and is utilized for hydroelectric power generation, flood control, recreation, and water supply.
- 2) Lake Keowee- this 18,372-acre lake was created when Duke Power Corporation dammed the Keowee and Little Rivers for power generation, and is situated on the border between Oconee and Pickens Counties. Its waters are also used for cooling the reactors of the Oconee Nuclear Station. Being located in the foothills, Keowee offers mountain vistas that greatly enhance traditional recreational activities with beautiful scenery. As a result, the steep slopes surrounding Lake Keowee are the sites of some of the heaviest residential development in the county, leading to growing debate regarding the usage of the resource. The lake's waters are used for power generation, recreation, and water supply. It should be noted that some of Lake Keowee's waters are transferred out of basin by the City of Greenville, a point of growing concern among many of those living near the lake.
- 3) Lake Jocassee- Located in northeast Oconee along the county's border with Pickens County, Lake Jocassee's 7,565 acres of clear mountain waters are formed by the impoundment of the Toxaway, Whitewater, and Thompson Rivers. The lake, whose bottom lies approximately 324 feet below surface at its deepest point, was built by Duke Power Corporation for power generation soon after Lake Keowee was completed in the early 1970's. Lake Jocassee's natural shoreline is protected by thousands of acres of public lands and extremely rough terrain.
- 4) Lake Yonah- Completed in 1925, Lake Yonah was constructed on the Tugalo River to generate hydroelectric power for the Georgia Power Company. Currently offering public access at two relatively remote Georgia landings, public use of Lake Yonah has traditionally been relative light. In recent years, however, the 325-acre impoundment has been the scene of increased development, particularly on the Georgia side. Extremely steep terrain and an isolated location generally restrict public access on the Oconee side to boat and barge traffic.
- 5) Lake Tugalo- Located upstream from Lake Yonah, Lake Tugalo was one of a series of hydroelectric dams constructed in the early years of the twentieth century by Georgia Power Company. Lake Tugalo's 597 acres of water stretch along the South Carolina/

Georgia border from the end of Section 4 of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River to its confluence with the Tallulah River.

In addition to the waters listed above, Oconee County's borders encompass a number of private lakes, with many of them home to a number of lakefront communities. Among these are:

- a. Lake Becky
- b. Lake Chattooga
- c. Lake Cheohee
- d. Lake Cherokee
- e. Crystal Lake
- f. Lake Jemiki
- g. Mountain Rest Lake
- h. Whitewater Lake

The following rivers and creeks are generally considered to be among Oconee County's most significant streams:

- 1) Chattooga River- Considered by many to be the jewel of natural resources in Oconee County, the Chattooga flows out of North Carolina and forms approximately 40 miles of border between South Carolina and Georgia. It is widely acclaimed to be one of the best whitewater rivers in the nation, with rapids ranging from Class III to Class V. The Chattooga, one of the first Wild and Scenic Rivers in the nation, attracts thousands of visitors to the county each year.
- 2) Tugalo River- Before the creation of Lakes Yonah, Tugalo and Hartwell, the Tugalo River (spelled Tugaloo sometimes) began at the confluence of the Chattooga and Tallulah Rivers and flowed southeastward to its confluence with the Seneca River, the beginning of the Savannah River. Today the remaining short section of the river flows out of Lake Yonah into the backwaters of Lake Hartwell. The Tugalo was once a main artery of travel and commerce for early residents of the region.
- 3) Chauga River- For years the Chauga has been overshadowed by the larger and more famous Chattooga River. Recently, however, the pristine Chauga has begun to attract its share of attention from both whitewater enthusiasts (who extol the river's Class V rapids) and conservationists. Approximately 14 miles of the river flow through U.S. Forest Service lands before entering developed areas near the headwaters of Lake Hartwell, the Chauga's ultimate destination.
- 4) Thompson River- Beginning in North Carolina, the Thompson flows south into Oconee County's Lake Jocassee. This remote river, which is noted for rugged terrain and beautiful waterfalls, supports a healthy population of native trout.

- 5) Coneross Creek- This stream stands as an example of intense utilization of a smaller water source by a significant portion of the county's population. The creek's waters are used as a water source for the town of Walhalla; drinking water for livestock all along its course; an irrigation source for various activities; a source for dilution of treated outfall from the Oconee Sewer Treatment Facility; hydroelectric power generation near Seneca; recreational fishing; and as it enters the backwaters of Lake Hartwell, boating. Beginning west of Walhalla near the base of Stumphouse Mountain, Coneross Creek flows generally southeast through the heart of what has come to be the most heavily developed section of the county, often suffering from the effects of both its usage and location. DHEC's Bureau of Water has listed 18.26 miles of the Coneross as being impaired from high levels of fecal coliform (see Table NR-6). Among the sources of pollution noted by the agency are improperly operating septic tanks, land application of poultry litter, and access to the stream by livestock.
- 6) Brasstown Creek- This stream flows out of Oconee's mountains through sparsely populated areas, eventually entering the Tugalo River. Noted as a good trout stream by area anglers, Brasstown Creek flows over one of the more beautiful waterfalls in the region before passing through the Brasstown Creek Heritage Preserve, a habitat for several rare plants.

Other Oconee County streams worthy of note include:

- a. Whitewater River
- b. Little River
- c. Choestoea Creek
- d. Cheohee Creek
- e. Tamassee Creek
- f. Station Creek

Water Classifications

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Bureau of Water is charged with identifying and classifying the surface waters of South Carolina. These classifications indicate the scope of allowable uses of the waters based on state regulations. Oconee County's classified waters fall into two categories:

- (1) **Fresh Waters (FW)** - suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation and as a source for drinking water supply after conventional treatment in accordance with the requirements of DHEC. Fresh water is suitable for fishing, indigenous aquatic fauna and flora, and industrial and agricultural uses.
- (2) **Trout Waters-**
 - a. **Natural (TN)**- suitable for supporting reproducing trout populations and a cold water balanced indigenous aquatic community of fauna and flora, as well as uses listed in Fresh Waters.

- b. **Put, Grow, and Take (TPGT)**- suitable for supporting growth of stocked trout populations and a balanced indigenous aquatic community of fauna and flora, as well as uses listed in Fresh Waters.

In addition to the classifications, the Bureau of Water enforces quality standards that strictly limit usage of the waters in such a manner as to maintain the classifications assigned to them. (SC Regulation 61-68: Water Classifications and Standards, DHEC)

Table NR-6 lists the classified waters in Oconee County. These range in size from the largest lakes to small creeks, but not all streams in the county are on the list. The state regulations governing the classifications and standards, however, apply to the listed stream and any unlisted tributaries.

Table NR-6

Classified Surface Waters in Oconee County		
Name	*Classification	Description
Bad Creek	ORW	All
Bad Creek Reservoir	FW	“
Battle Creek	TPGT	“
Bear Creek	TN	“
Bearcamp Creek	TN	“
Brasstown Creek	TPGT	“
Burgess Creek	TN	“
Camp Branch	FW	“
Cantrell Creek	TN	“
Chattooga River	FW	From confluence with Opossum Creek to Tugaloo River
Chattooga River	ORW	From NC state line to confluence with Opossum Creek
Chauga Creek (Jerry Creek)	FW	All
Chauga River	ORW	From headwaters to 1 mile above US 76
Chauga River	FW	From 1 mile above US 76 to Tugaloo River
Cheohee Creek	ORW	From Headwaters to end of US Forest Service land
Cheohee Creek	FW	From US Forest Service land to confluence with Tamassee Creek
Choestoea Creek	FW	All
Coneross Creek	FW	“
Corbin Creek	ORW	“
Dark Creek	ORW	“
Devils Fork Creek	TN	“
East Fork Chattooga River	ORW	Form NC state line to confluence with Indian Camp Branch
East Fork Chattooga River	TN	From confluence with Indian Camp Branch to Chattooga River
Fall Creek	FW	All
Fishtrap Branch	FW	“
Hartwell Lake	FW	“
Hemery Creek (Ramsey Creek)	FW	“
Howard Creek	ORW	From headwaters to .3 miles below Highway 130 above flow augmentation system at the Bad Creek Pumped Storage Station dam
Howard Creek	TN	From just above flow augmentation system at the Bad Creek Pumped Storage Station dam to confluence with Devils Fork Creek
Indian Camp Branch	ORW	All
Ira Branch	ORW	“

Jacks Creek	ORW	“
Jerry Creek- SEE CHAUGA CREEK		
Jumping Branch	TN	“
Keowee Lake	FW	“
King Creek	ORW	“
Knox Creek	FW	“
Lake Cheohee	FW	“
Lake Cherokee	FW	“
Lake Jocassee	TPGT	“
Lake Tugaloo	TPGT	“
Lick Log Creek	FW	From headwaters though Thrift Lake
Lick Log Creek	ORW	From Thrift Lake to Chattooga River
Limber Pole Creek	TN	All
Little River	FW	“
Long Creek	FW	“
Martin Creek	FW	“
McKinney's Creek	TN	From headwaters to Highway 25
McKinney's Creek	FW	From Highway 25 to Lake Keowee
Mill Creek	TN	All
Moody Creek	TN	“
Moss Mill Creek	ORW	“
North Little River	TPGT	From confluence of Mill Creek and Burgess Creek to Highway 11
North Little River	FW	Highway 11 to confluence with Little River
Opossum Creek	FW	All
Pig Pen Branch	ORW	“
Pinckney Branch	FW	“
Ramsey Creek- SEE HEMEDY CREEK		
Reedy Branch	FW	“
Sawhead Branch	FW	“
Shoulderbone Branch	FW	“
Slatten Branch	ORW	“
Smeltzer Creek	TN	From headwaters to Highway 130
Smeltzer Creek	TPGT	From Highway 130 to North Fork of Little River
Swaford Crddk	TN	All
Tamassee Creek	ORW	From headwaters to end of US Forest Service land
Tamassee Creek	FW	From US Forest Service land to confluence with Cheohee Creek
Thompson River	TN	All
Tilly Branch	FW	“
Tugaloo River	FW	“
Turpin Branch	FW	“
Unnamed Creek	FW	Enters Little River at Newry
West Fork Townes Creek	TN	“
Whetstone Creek	TN	“
White Oak Creek	TN	From headwaters to Knox Creek
Whitewater River	ORW	From NC state line to Lake Jocassee
Wright Creek	ORW	All

*FW = Fresh Water; TN = Natural Trout Waters; ORW = Outstanding Resource Waters

Source: South Carolina Regulation 61-69: Classified Waters, DHEC

Watersheds

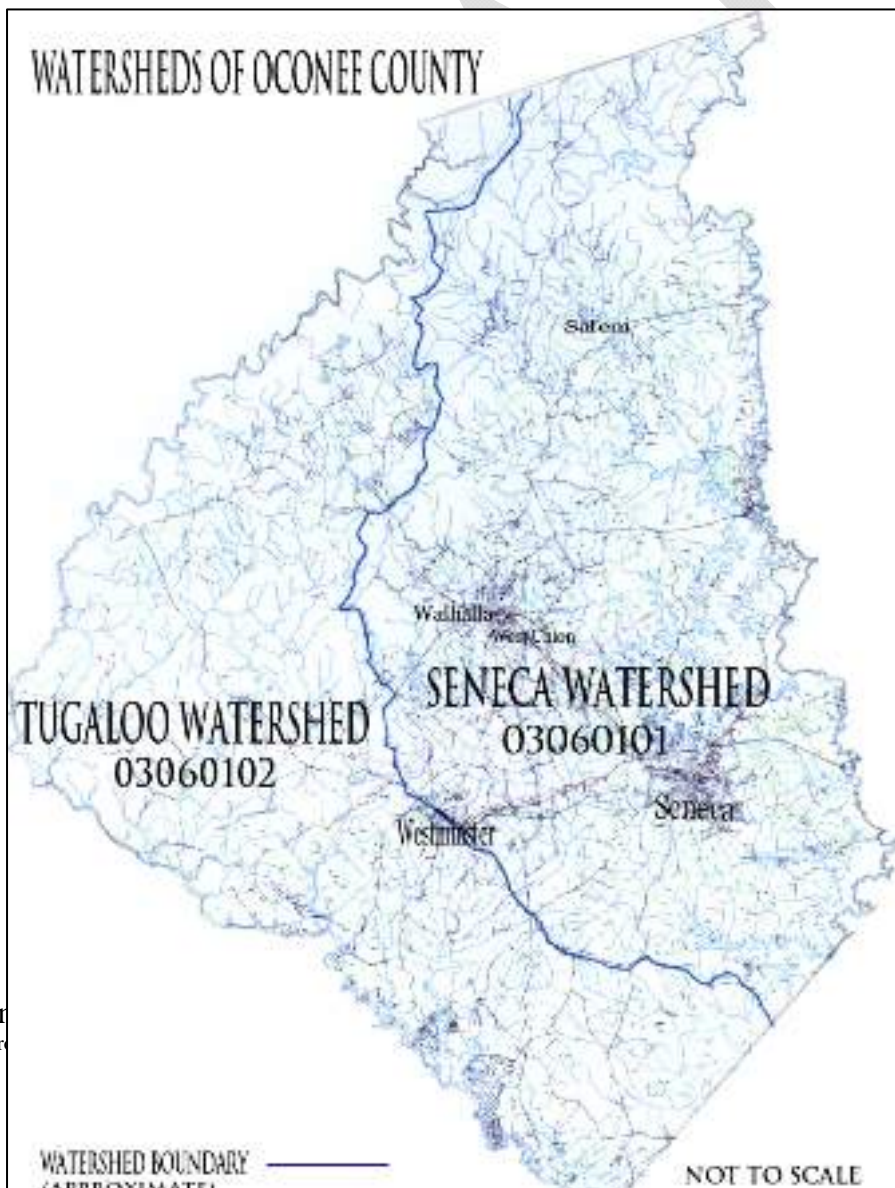
A watershed is a geographic area into which the surrounding waters, sediments, and dissolved materials drain. The edge of a particular watershed extends along the peak of surrounding topographic ridges, directing all surface runoff within the boundary back into the streams of the watershed. Many watersheds often cover large regions, spreading over many thousands of acres. As a result, it is not uncommon for a single watershed to be crossed by a number of counties lying in different states, making it convenient for various governmental entities within the watershed to coordinate in approaching shared issues. The individual

watersheds are designated by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), a division of the United States Department of the Interior.

Oconee County crosses two major watersheds, the Tugaloo Watershed (USGS Cataloging Unit #03060102) and the Seneca Watershed (USGS Cataloging Unit #03060101). The two then empty into the Upper Savannah River Watershed. The upper reaches of the Tugaloo Watershed lie in the southern Appalachian Mountains, with approximately 977 square miles encompassed within the borders. The total perimeter measures approximately 200 miles. Counties crossing the watershed include Clay, Jackson, and Macon in North Carolina; Franklin, Habersham, Hart, Rabun, Stephens, and Towns in Georgia; and Anderson and Oconee in South Carolina. There are approximately 1,274 river miles, as well as 82 lakes totaling 22,655 acres, within the watershed. See Figure NR-7.

As noted above, the other watershed crossed by Oconee County is the Seneca Watershed. Like the Tugaloo Watershed with which it shares its western border, the upper reaches of the Seneca Watershed lie in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, and encompasses approximately 1,024 square miles. The watershed is crossed by Jackson and Transylvania Counties in North Carolina; and Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties in South Carolina. The approximately 160-mile perimeter encloses 123 lakes totaling almost 38,940 acres. See Figure NR-7.

Figure NR-7



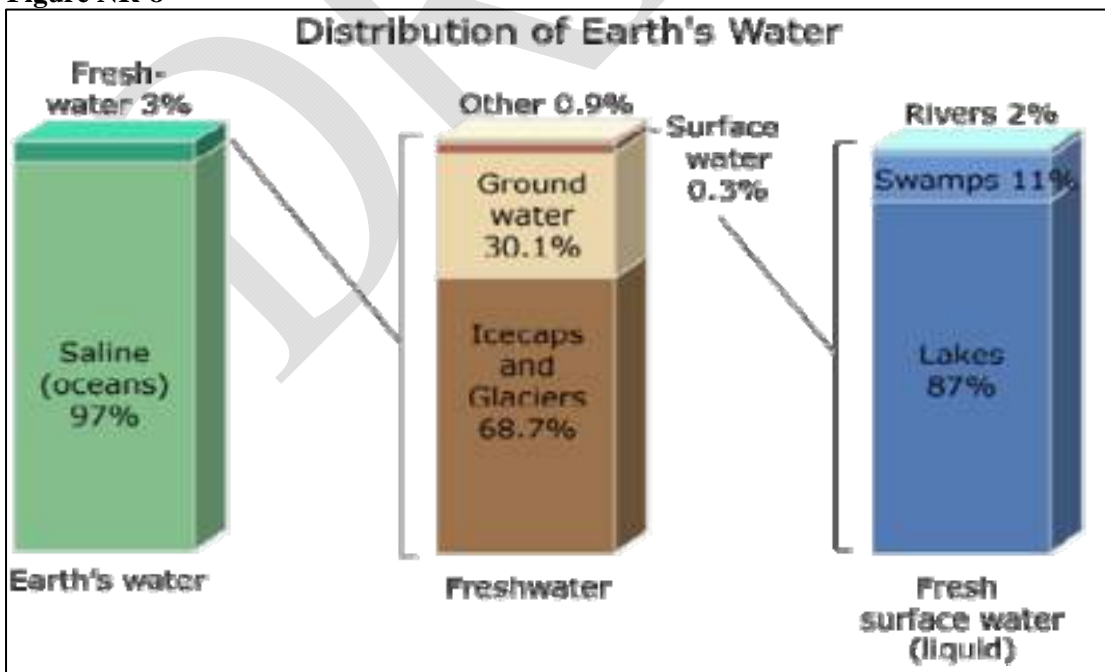
Water Supplies

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rates Oconee County's watershed health as very good, with water quality being seen to have a "Low Vulnerability" to threats. Presently, county residents relying on community water systems are supplied with an abundant supply of raw water for treatment by public water systems. As growth continues near the most sensitive waters, however, chances for damage will increase. This is particularly true for areas with steep slopes and thin soils. Those relying on private wells for their water supply are in similar circumstances, for while most wells offer safe water supplies, highly developed areas offer increased chances of impaired water quality.

Water availability is closely related to the climate of a particular area. However, the cost of producing clean drinking water is dependent both on water availability and on the amount of pollution existing in the water. Therefore, water supply is not only a concern for Oconee County, but all around the world. Part of the reason is most of the earth's water is contained in the oceans, leaving only 3% as fresh water. Of that, the vast majority is tied up in icecaps and glaciers, leaving only 0.9 % of the earth's water resources as surface water; yet, it is the resource used for most of the drinking water in our region.

Figure NR-8 (below) illustrates the distribution of the Earth's water.

Figure NR-8



Source: USGS

The United States is blessed to have an abundance of available drinking water, but our region, the Southeast, has a tendency to experience drought. The amount of rainfall in our region has been considerably low in recent years, bringing water issues to the forefront. Lake levels, the most apparent indicator of supply, have on a number of occasions dropped low enough to reveal long-submerged relics of yesteryear. As a result, drought has become an increasing issue throughout our region. Already, the impacts have been quite severe, with water restrictions forced on individuals; farmers forced to purchase hay from other regions, or sell some of their stock due to the lack of rain; and tourism suffering from the closing of marinas and boat ramps. Were this a one-time event, it would be a simple matter of making some adjustments until conditions improved. In this case, however, instead of a single instance, it has become a way of life.

Drought is a natural event occurring over a time period characterized by less than normal rainfall. Many ways of measuring a drought have been developed in the United States, which adds to the difficulty of defining and quantifying its occurrence. Two of the more common drought indices are the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) and the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI). The Palmer Drought Severity Index considers water supply (precipitation), demand (evaporation), and loss (runoff). On the other hand, the Standardized Precipitation Index considers only precipitation. In both indices, a negative number indicates drought and a positive number represents wet conditions.

In Oconee County, from September of 2005 to the present, rainfall has been below normal according to the Palmer Drought Index, computed by the Regional Drought Monitor (SC State Climatology Office). According to the Standardized Precipitation Index for March 2007 – February 2009 the majority of Oconee is shown as exceptionally dry (-2.00 and below) and a small area in the northern area of the county is indexed as extremely dry (-1.99 to -1.60). It is easy to see that Oconee County has been significantly impacted by extreme drought conditions.

The South Carolina Water Plan⁵ provides a very simple definition of drought: “a period of diminished precipitation that results in negative impacts upon the hydrology, agriculture, biota, energy, and economy of the State.” The plan places droughts into three categories. A meteorological drought is simply a period of time in which there is less rainfall than the average over the given time interval. An agricultural drought causes real damage to the areas crops and farmland. “This type occurs when soil moisture availability to agricultural crops is reduced to a level causing adverse effects on the agricultural production of a region.”⁶ The final classification of drought is a hydrological drought, which is signified by a shortage of water in streams, lakes, and ground water supplies.⁷ Oconee County has experienced all 3 types of drought during the last decade. Fortunately, in 2009, conditions improved, with increased rainfall filling up lakes and returning water tables to pre-drought conditions. We cannot say, however, how long these better times will last.

⁵ South Carolina Water Plan. Second Edition. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources: Land, Water, and Conservation Division. January 2004.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Figures NR-9 through NR-14 (on the following pages) provide a historical review of the progression of drought conditions between September 2006 and October 2009.

Figure NR-9

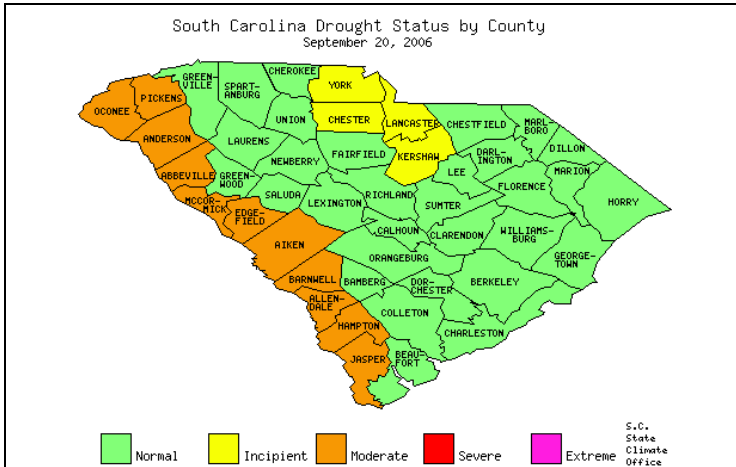


Figure NR-10

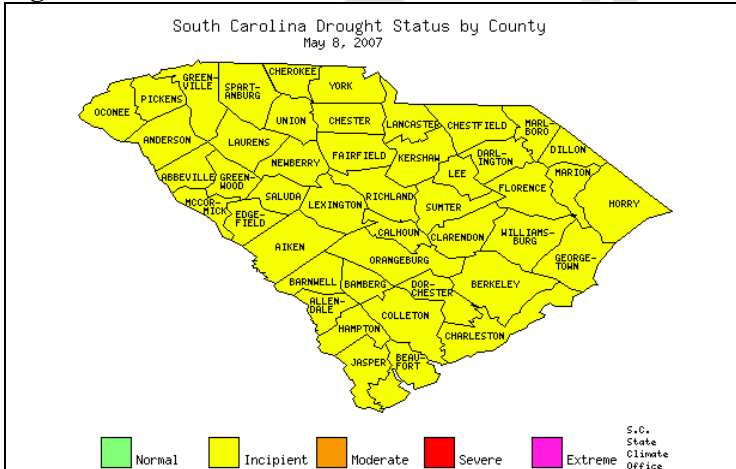


Figure NR-11

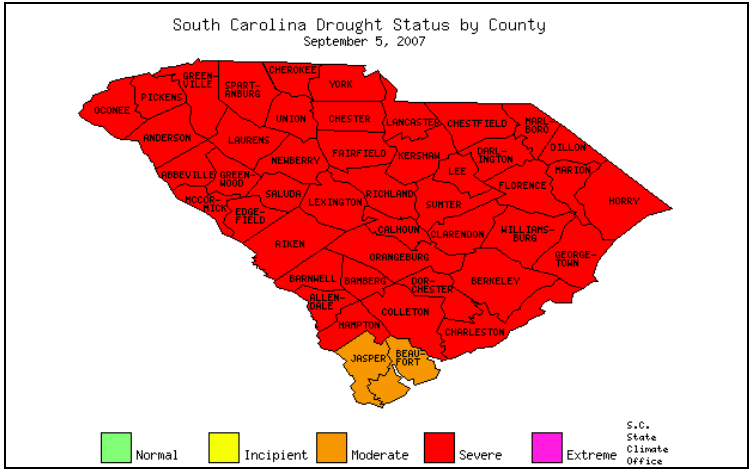


Figure NR-12

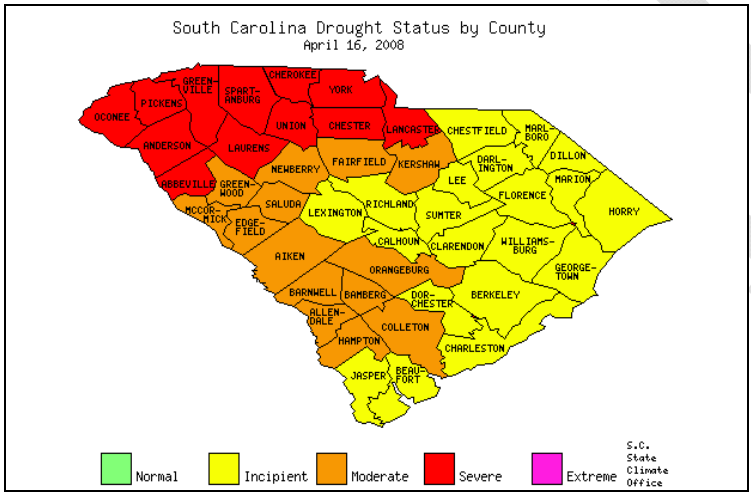


Figure NR-13

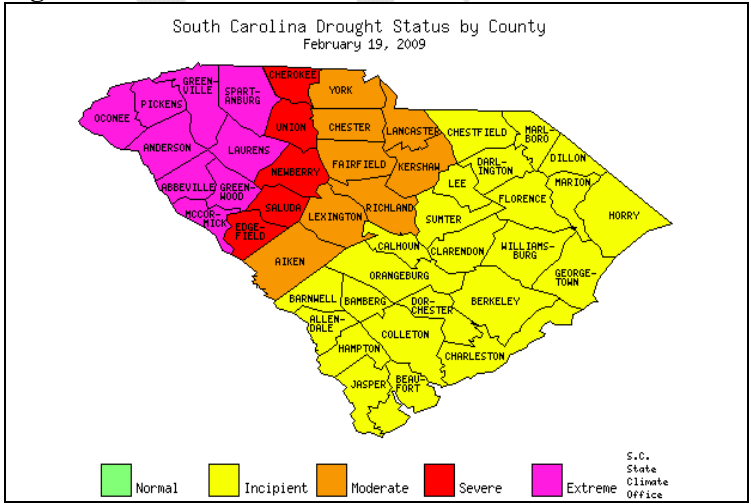
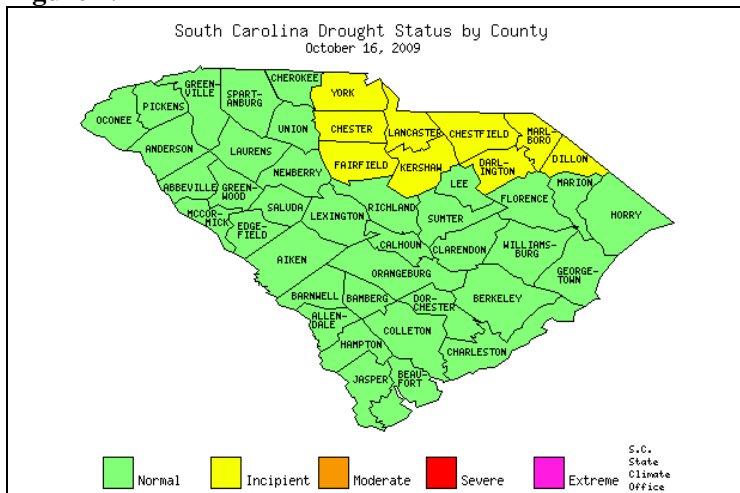


Figure NR-14



Experience has shown that the rainfall we receive during one year is no indicator of the next. Therefore, there is no way to know for sure whether any model or prediction related to future drought conditions will come true, but the fact remains that Oconee County needs to establish better ways of managing our water resources; the cost of taking no action is simply too high to do nothing. By using the South Carolina Drought Response Program as a guide, Oconee County should develop a local drought management plan of its own. “A drought management plan outlines a comprehensive program of action that enables communities to recognize and deal with drought. An effective plan provides for monitoring water supplies and uses; identifying alternative water sources, including arranging hookups to neighborhood water supplies; developing education programs and demand reduction strategies; defining implementation and enforcement mechanisms; and outlining review and update procedures.”⁸ Having a document of this nature will aid local officials in dealing with major drought events in the future.

Water can no longer be taken for granted in South Carolina and Oconee County. With the overwhelming presence of water in our county it is easy to take the availability of water for granted but if those resources are allocated to others, Oconee County may be left wanting the very resource that we have so much of. The State’s water plan sets out to answer the question: “What steps should the State take now to ensure that adequate amounts of water will be available in the future?” Oconee County must not only ask this question, we must answer it and act to ensure that adequate water is available. The state’s waters fall under the Public Trust doctrine, which means that water is considered too important to be owned by any one person. Therefore, we must work to manage the water resources in our trust so as to ensure that those involved will have access to the water they need; and during drought conditions, all users share equally in reducing daily usage, avoiding any undue burdens on any particular person or group.

This concern is made all the more important by the fact that we are expected to continue growing and developing at a rapid rate. Over the past decade, there have been approximately 1000 new residences (mobile homes and stick built) on average added to the tax rolls every year. Given that the average household water usage per day is 350 gallons of

⁸ SC Department of Natural Resources. “The South Carolina Drought Response Program”.

water, over the past 10 years, without considering industry, schools, and commercial uses, the Oconee County has increased its water usage by 3,500,000 gallons per day. It is obvious that, at some point, such increases will not be sustainable. Therefore, we must begin to manage our water resources from a comprehensive perspective.

Local Water Plan

According to the state's water plan, two of the most important elements in water resource management are to, 1) know how much water is available; and, 2) to know how much is being used. Oconee County should begin to ensure the most effective use of its water resources by conducting a comprehensive water study for our area. This study should focus on how much water is available today, how is it currently allocated, how much is available for future allocation, and how to determine at what point during drought conditions will all users need to be on water restrictions. When resources are becoming scarce, everyone must share the burden of conservation; including those permits that take water out of one basin into another. A flow rate analysis should also be part of this study to determine how much water is flowing into Oconee County. Knowing how much water is available in Oconee will not only allow us to identify how much is available, but also will allow us to monitor compliance with state and federal regulations governing withdrawals.

Table NR-9 (below) shows the surface area and volume of Lake Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee.

Table NR-9

State Rank	Lake	Drainage Basin	Lake Operator	Surface Area (acres)	Volume (acre-feet)
1	Hartwell	Savannah	Corps of Engineers	56,000	2,549,000
6	Jocassee	Savannah	Duke Power	7,565	1,185,000
8	Keowee	Savannah	Duke Power	18,372	1,000,000

Source: South Carolina Water Plan 2006

Table NR-10 (below) shows the approximate acreage of surface water area in some lakes in Oconee, Pickens and Anderson Counties.

Table NR-10

Lakes	Oconee County (acres)	Anderson County (acres)	Pickens County (acres)
Jocassee	5,310	-	2,043
Keowee	13,102	-	5,270
Hartwell	11,632	23,633	1,590
Tugaloo	225	-	-
Yonah	160	-	-
Secession	-	244	-
Broadway	-	640	-

Russell	-	800	-
Total Acreage	30,489	25,317	8,903

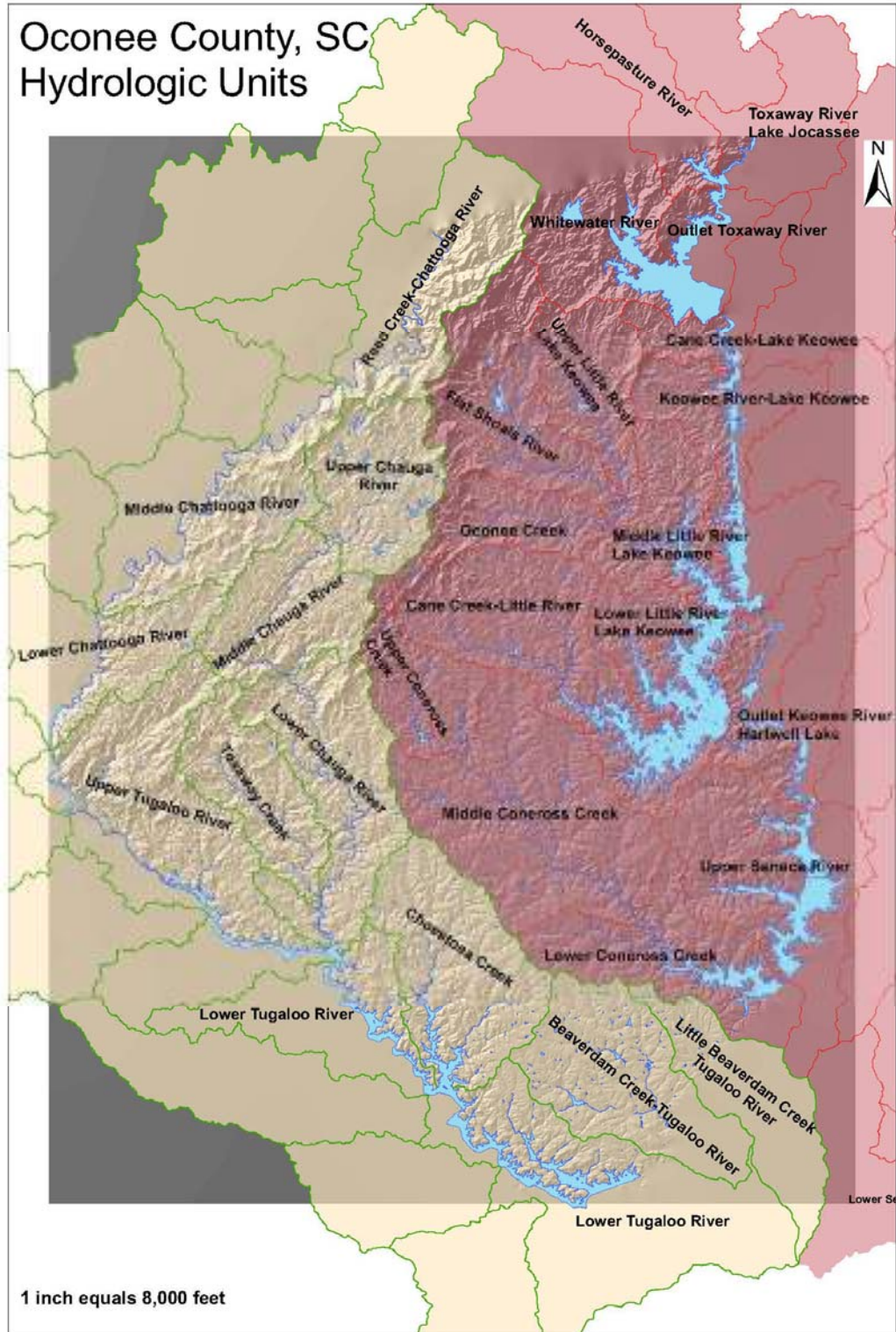
To develop a water management plan, it is vital to possess accurate data collected over time from a properly designed network of monitoring stations. Currently, there is only one active monitoring station in Oconee County, which means that the establishment of an adequate monitoring system will be one of the first steps necessary for the development of a plan. Therefore, Oconee County should work with Federal and State agencies to develop a stream monitoring system that will track the available quantity and quality of the water in the major streams and rivers in the County.

Once established, a countywide monitoring system will provide the data we need to determine accurate flow rates, which is key to the development of the state standard (7Q10) that determines allotments of water. This standard is defined as the lowest mean stream flow over 7 consecutive days that can be expected to occur in a 10 year period. In any year, there is a 10% probability that the average flow for 7 consecutive days will be equal to or less than the 7Q10.⁹ If stream flows reach the 7Q10 for an extended period, and allocations exceed the level established, water availability would not meet needs. As the State Water Plan states, we need to know what flow levels are required in our streams to protect public health and safety, maintain fish and wildlife, and provide recreation, while promoting aesthetic and ecological values.

⁹ Ibid

Figure NR-15 (below) identifies all the sub-basins in Oconee County that would need to be considered as part of a water flow study:

Figure NR-15



Impaired Waters

The EPA lists waters that are considered to be impaired in quality under the Clean Water Act. Those that flow through Oconee County are listed in Table NR-11.

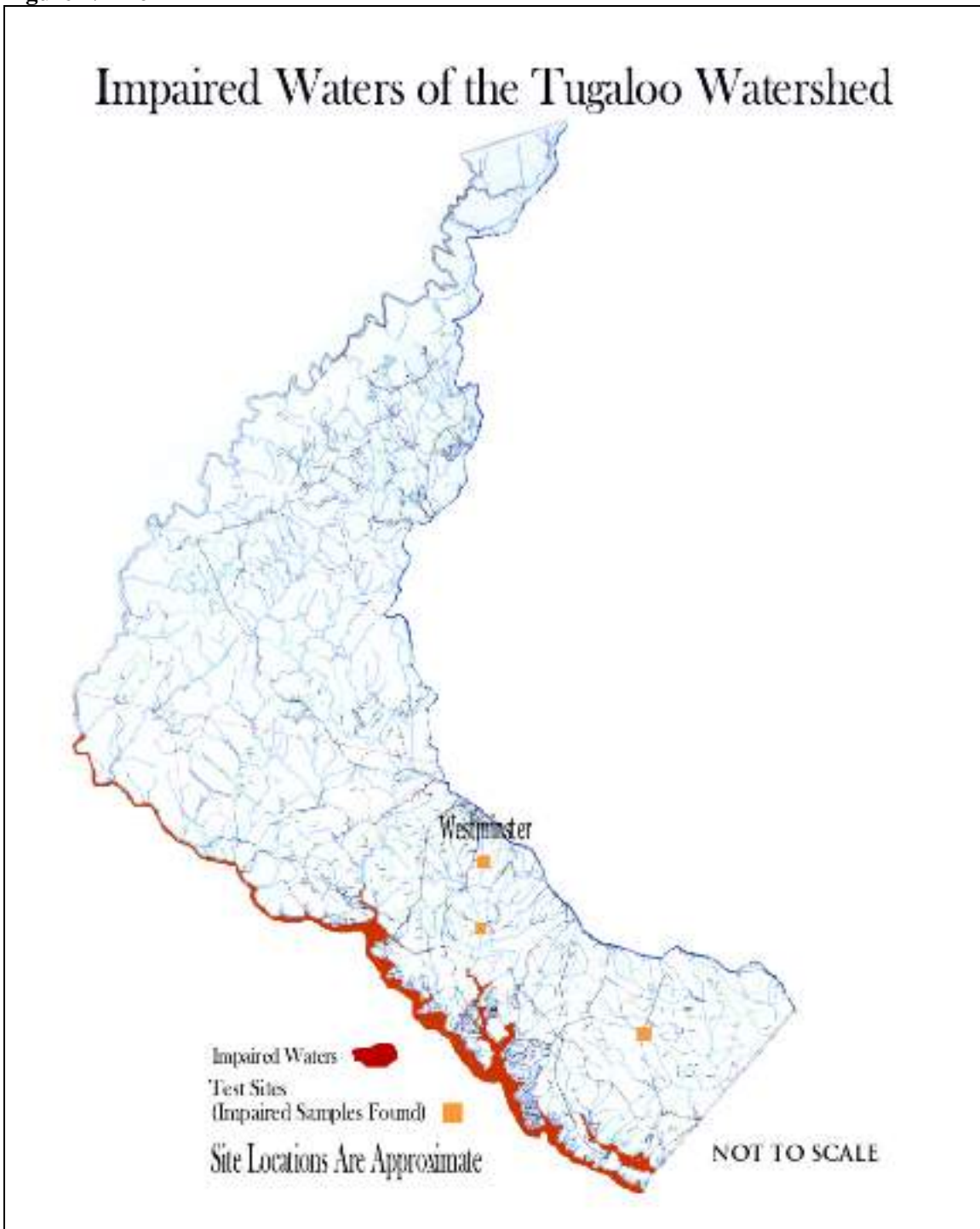
Table NR-11

Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Impaired Waters in Oconee County		
Name	ID	Concern
Lake Hartwell (All)	SC-FCA-9995-1998	PCB's
Lake Hartwell (Seneca River Arm at Buoy B/W MKRS S- 28A & S-29)	SC-SV-288-1998	Copper
Choestoea Creek (At S-37-49)	SC-SV-108-1998	Pathogens
Norris Creek (At S- 37-435)	SC-SV-301-1998	Pathogens
Beaverdam Creek (At S-37-66)	SC-SV-345-1998	Macroinvertebrate/Pathogens
Coneross Creek (At SC 59)	SC-SV-004-1998	Pathogens
Coneross Creek (At S-37-54)	SC-SV-333-1998	Pathogens
Lake Keowee (Cane Creek Arm)	SC-SV-311-1998	Zinc
Lake Jocassee (At confluence of Thompson and Whitewater Rivers)	SC-SV-336-1998	Copper
Lake Keowee (Above SC 130)	SC-SV-338-1998	Copper

Source: EPA (2000)

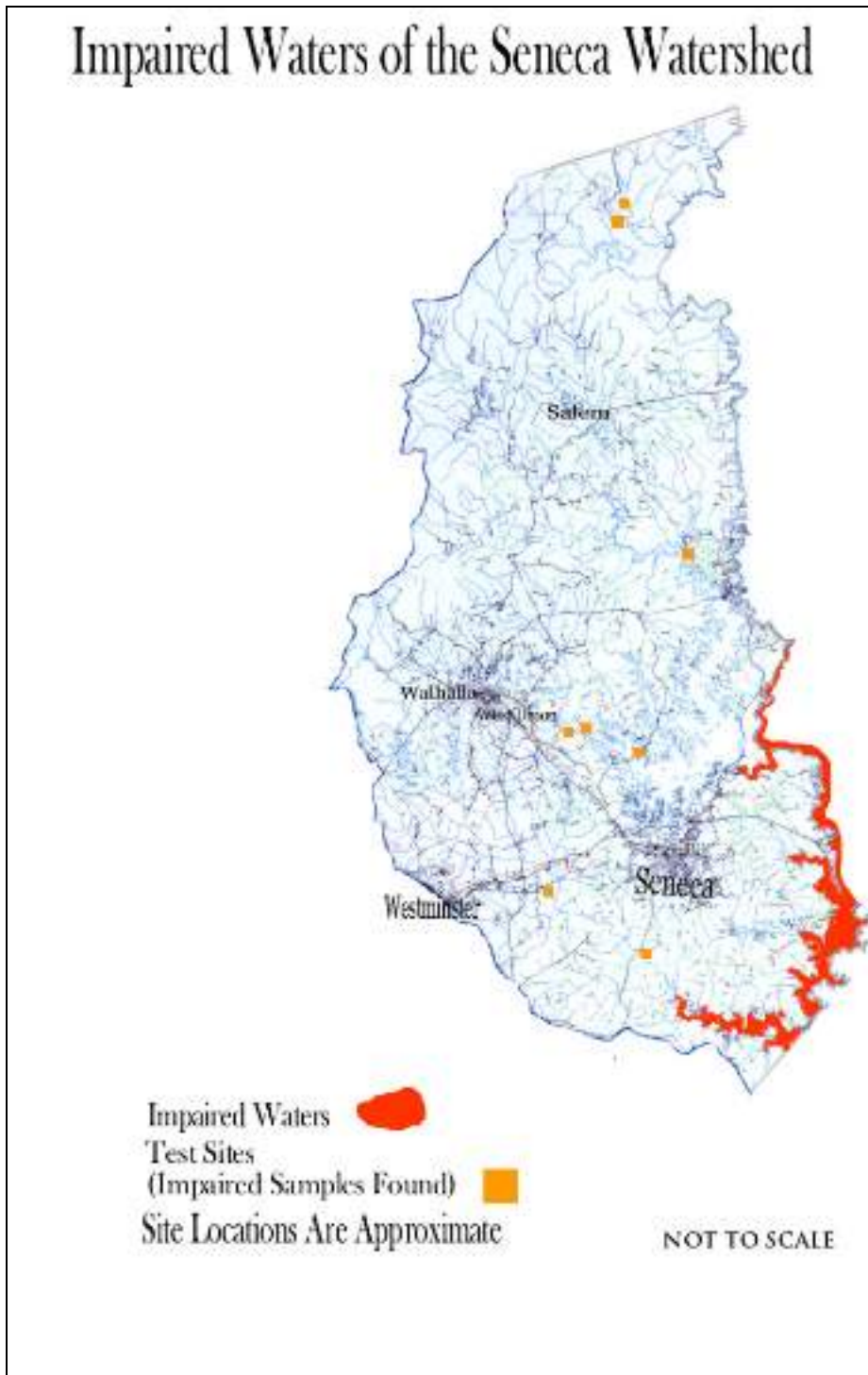
Figures NR-3 and NR-4 (below) illustrate the location of the various impaired waters noted in Table NR-11.

Figure NR-16



Source: Oconee Planning Department

Figure NR-17



Source: Oconee Planning Department

Flora and Fauna

Oconee County is home to a tremendous variety of plants and animals. Much of northern and western Oconee County is located in the edge of the southern Appalachian Mountains, which is ideal habitat for many life forms not typically found in most other areas of the state. Yet, in the southern end of the county, one can find a mix plants and animals typical of what might be seen throughout the rest of piedmont South Carolina. As one might expected, the foothills area separating the mountains and piedmont areas offers habitats sometimes acceptable to plants and animals from both regions.

When Europeans first settled in what is today's Oconee County, the forests were primarily comprised of hardwoods interspersed with various stands of softwoods. The hardwood forests were cleared for limber, farming and other uses. The deforested lands allowed to grow back were often taken over by the faster growing softwoods, particularly pines, permanently altering the character of the region. Today, in the piedmont section of the county the most important trees include: loblolly pine; shortleaf pine; Virginia pine; red cedar; yellow poplar; sweetgum; cottonwood; blackgum; ash and oak. In the mountainous forests the dominant trees include white pine; pitch pine; shortleaf pine; Virginia pine; hemlock; red cedar; various oaks; black walnut; and yellow poplar. (Soil Survey of Oconee County) In 1990, over 268,000 acres of Oconee County were counted as forestland. (South Carolina Statistical Abstract)

Many Oconee residents are avid sportsmen, particularly devoting large amounts of time and money to the pursuit of hunting and fishing. Oconee is home to a variety of game animals including whitetail deer, wild turkey, rabbits, squirrels, doves, and quail. Black bear and wild boars are hunted in the mountainous areas. In addition, a few individuals remain devoted to the traditional sports of hunting raccoon and opossum. Oconee County fishermen pursue a variety of species, including bass, trout, crappie, bream, and catfish. Many state record fish have been taken from Oconee waters. Of particular note among county lakes in recent years has been Lake Jocassee, the source of quite a few record-setting trout. Mention must also be made of Oconee's cold, pristine streams, home to a number of trout populations, both stocked and native.

Oconee County's sparsely populated remote areas often act as a haven for plants and animals long gone from more developed areas. As a result, Oconee County is widely recognized as a special environment, providing habitats unavailable in most other regions. Table NR-7 provides an inventory of Oconee County's rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals listed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Table NR-8

Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species found in Oconee County (Updated 03/28/01)			
Common Name¹	Global Rank²	State Rank³	Legal Status⁴
Cooper's Hawk	G5	S?	SC
Striped Maple	G5	S1S2	SC
Blue Monkshood	G4	S2	SC
Brook Floater	G3	S?	SC
Nodding Onion	G5	S?	SC
Smooth Indigobush	G4?	S?	SC
Green Salamander	G3G4	S1	SC
Pipevine	G5	S2	SC
Single-Sorus Spleenwort	G4	S1	RC
Black-Stem Spleenwort	G5	S1S2	SC
Walking-Fern Spleenwort	G5	S2	SC
Maidenhair Spleenwort	G5	S?	SC
Georgia Aster	G2G3	S?	SC
New England Aster	G5	S?	SC
Yellow Birch	G5	S?	SC
Brook Saxifrage	G4	S1	SC
Mountain Bitter Cress	G2G3	S?	SC
Divided Toothwort	G4?	S?	SC
Narrowleaf Sedge	G5	S?	SC
Fort Mountain Sedge	G3	S?	SC
Appalachian Sedge	G4	S?	SC
South Carolina Sedge	G4	S?	SC
Biltmore Sedge	G3	S1	NC
Graceful Sedge	G5	S?	SC
Manhart Sedge	G3	S?	SC
Eastern Few-Fruit Sedge	G4	S?	SC
Longstalk Sedge	G5	S1	SC
Plantain-Leaved Sedge	G5	S?	SC
Drooping Sedge	G4	S?	SC
Rough Sedge	G5	S?	SC
Tussock Sedge	G5	S?	SC
Pretty Sedge	G4	S?	SC
Scarlet Indian-Paintbrush	G5	S2	RC
Blue Cohosh	G4G5	S2	SC
Evan's Cheilolejeunea	G1	S1	SC
Southern Broadleaf Enchanter's Nightshade	G5	S?	SC
Enchanter's Nightshade	G5T5	S1	SC
Southern Red-Backed Vole	G5	S2S3	SC
Carolina Red-Backed Vole	G5T4	S2S3	SC
Whorled Horse-Balm	G3	S?	SC
Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bat	G3G4	S2?	SE
Hellbender	G4	S?	SC
Large Yellow Lady's-Slipper	G5	S?	SC
Bulblet Fern	G5	S?	SC
Lowland Brittle Fern	G5	S?	SC
Seepage Salamander	G3G4	S?	SC
Wild Bleeding-Heart	G4	S?	SC
Umbrella-Leaf	G4	S1	RC
Glade Fern	G5	S1	SC
Goldie's Woodfern	G4	S1	SC
Evergreen Woodfern	G5	S?	SC
Smooth Coneflower	G2	S1	FE/SE
Yellow Lance	G2G3	S?	SC
Wahoo	G5	S1	SC
Hollow Joe-Pye Weed	G5?	S?	SC
Mountain Witch-Alder	G3	S1	RC
Showy Orchis	G5	S?	SC
Teaberry	G5	S1	SC
Black Huckleberry	G5	S?	SC
Virginia Stickseed	G5	S?	SC
Liverleaf	G5	S?	SC

Little-Leaved Alumroot	G4	S?	SC
American Water-Pennywort	G4	S?	SC
Small Whorled Pogonia	G2	S1	FT/ST
Butternut	G3G4	S?	SC
Naked-Fruited Rush	G4	S?	SC
Woods-Rush	G5	S?	SC
Ground Juniper	G5	S?	SC
False Dandelion	G3	S?	SC
Large Twayblade	G5	S?	SC
Kidney-Leaf Twayblade	G4	S?	SC
Yellow Honeysuckle	G5?	S2	SC
Climbing Fern	G4	S1S2	SC
Fraser Loosestrife	G2	S1	RC
Canada Moonseed	G5	S?	SC
Two-Leaf Bishop's Cap	G5	S?	SC
Oswego Tea	G5	S?	SC
Sweet Pinesap	G3	S1	RC
Eastern Small-Footed Myotis	G3	S1	ST
Little Brown Myotis	G5	S3?	SC
Northern Myotis	G4	S3S4	SC
Indiana Myotis	G2	S1	FE/SE
Eastern Woodrat	G5	S3S4	SC
Southern Appalachian Woodrat	G5T4Q	S3S4	SC
Nestronia	G4	S2	SC
Adder's-Tongue	G5	S?	SC
One-Flowered Broomrape	G5	S?	SC
Hairy Sweet-Cicely	G5	S?	SC
Outcrop	G?	S?	SC
Allegheny-Spurge	G4G5	S1	RC
American Ginseng	G3G4	S2S3	RC
Hairy-Tailed Mole	G5	S?	SC
Kidneyleaf Grass-of-Parnassus	G4	S1	RC
Purple-Stem Cliff-Brake	G5	S1	RC
Fernleaf Phacelia	G5	S1	SC
Streambank Mock-Orange	G5	S1	SC
Gorge Leafy Liverwort	G2	S?	SC
Mountain Wavy-Leaf Moss	G3	S?	SC
Gay-Wing Milkwort	G5	S1	SC
Pickerel Frog	G5	S?	SC
Wood Frog	G5	S3	SC
Blacknose Dace	G5	S1	SC
Large-Leaved Mniun	G5	S?	SC
Catawba Rhododendron	G5	S?	SC
Sun-Facing Coneflower	G2	S1	NC
Large-Fruited Sanicle	G4	S1	SC
Lettuce-Leaf Saxifrage	G5	S?	SC
Oconee-Bells	G2	S2	NC
White Goldenrod	G5	S1	SC
Cinereus or Masked Shrew	G5	S?	SC
Pygmy Shrew	G5	S4	SC
Eastern Spotted Skunk	G5	S3S4	SC
Clingman's Hedge-Nettle	G2Q	S1	SC
Broad-Toothed Hedge-Nettle	G5T4T5	S1	SC
Mountain Camellia	G4	S2	RC
Swamp Rabbit	G5	S3	SC
New England Cottontail	G4	S2?	SC
Red Squirrel	G5	S3?	SC
Soft-Haired Thermopsis	G4?	S?	SC
Heart-Leaved Foam Flower	G5T5	S?	SC
Carolina Tassel-Rue	G5	S?	SC
Bristle-Fern	G4	S1	RC
Dwarf Filmy-Fern	G4G5	S2	RC
Faded Trillium	G3	S?	SC
Large-Flower Trillium	G5	S?	SC
Persistent Trillium	G1	S1	FE/SE

Southern Nodding Trillium	G3	S?	SC
A Trillium	G3	S?	SC
Painted Trillium	G5	S?	SC
Nodding Pogonia	G4	S2	SC
Barn-Owl	G5	S4	SC
American Bog Violet	G5T5	S?	SC
Yellow Violet	G5	S?	SC
Three-Parted Violet	G5	S?	SC
Three-Parted Violet	G5T?	S?	SC
Three-Parted Violet	G5T3?	S?	SC
Piedmont Strawberry	G2	S2	RC
Waterfall	G?	S?	SC
Eastern Turkeybeard	G4	S1	SC
Meadow Jumping Mouse	G5	S?	SC

¹Reference *South Carolina Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species Inventory* (S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources) for scientific name

²Global Rank- Degree of endangerment world-wide (The Nature Conservancy)

G1: Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extinction

G2: Imperiled globally because of rarity or factor(s) making it vulnerable

G3: Either very rare throughout its range or found locally in a restricted range, or having factors making it vulnerable

G4: Apparently secure globally, though it may be rare in parts of its range

G5: Demonstrably secure globally, though it may be rare in parts of its range

GH: Of historical occurrence throughout its range, with possibility of rediscovery

GX: Extinct throughout its range

G?: Status unknown

³State Rank- Degree of endangerment in South Carolina (The Nature Conservancy)

S1: Critically imperiled state-wide because of extreme rarity or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation

S2: Imperiled state-wide because of rarity or factor(s) making it vulnerable

S3: Rare or uncommon in state

S4: Apparently secure in state

S5: Demonstrably secure in state

SA: Accidental in state (usually birds or butterflies that are far outside normal range)

SE: Exotic established in state

SH: Of historical occurrence in state, with possibility of rediscovery

SN: Regularly occurring in state, but in a migratory, non-breeding form

SR: Reported in state, but without good documentation

SX: Extirpated from state

S?: Status unknown

⁴Legal Status

FE: Federal Endangered

FT: Federal Threatened

PE: Proposed for Federal listing as Endangered

PT: Proposed for Federal listing as Threatened

C: Candidate for Federal listing

NC: Of Concern, National (unofficial- plants only)

RC: Of Concern, Regional (unofficial- plants only)

SE: State Endangered (official state list- animals only)

ST: State Threatened (official state list- animals only)

SC: Of Concern, State

SX: State Extirpated

Source: *South Carolina Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species Inventory: Species Found in Oconee County* (S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources)

Unique Natural Resource-Based Recreational Opportunities

Recreational activities have become a significant part of Oconee County's economic life in recent years. While it is true that many other counties and cities across the nation have experienced similar trends, the changes in Oconee seem to have come about with less effort and expense than has been the case in many other places. For, unlike those areas that rely on manmade amusement activities to attract crowds, Oconee's recreational pursuits tend to center on its natural assets. Unfortunately, however, because these assets have too often been taken for granted, litter, vandalism, and pollution have occasionally threatened what is now an integral part of the Oconee County economy and lifestyle. Increasingly, however, attention is being focused on such issues, raising hopes for the future of Oconee's natural resources. If successful, such efforts will insure that the benefits of the county's natural assets will be enjoyed by many generations of Oconee County residents to come.

Perhaps Oconee County's best-known unique recreational resource is the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River. The river, which gained international attention during the 1970's as the backdrop for the movie "Deliverance", has attracted many thousands of individuals to the area in the last several decades. The stream has also led to the development of a small industry centered on whitewater sports, with a number of companies offering the public a chance to experience adventurous outdoor activities in Oconee. As a result, the county has experienced a significant economic boost from the river-related activities, with many unrelated businesses benefiting from the increased traffic.

Due to the combination of steep terrain and abundant streams, Oconee County boasts a wonderful collection of waterfalls. Although many guidebooks list up to eighteen of the more prominent ones, many smaller unnamed, yet beautiful, waterfalls may be found throughout the county. The better known Oconee waterfalls include:

- (1) Whitewater Falls- When taken as a unit, this series of six waterfalls located on the border of Oconee County and North Carolina comprises the highest series of waterfalls in eastern North America. Although the North Carolina's upper falls section is easily accessible more frequently visited, Oconee's Lower Whitewater Falls offers visitors a spectacular view of the Whitewater River cascading over a drop of 200 feet.
- (2) Issaqueena Falls- Located above Walhalla near another Oconee attraction, the Stumphouse Tunnel, this easily accessible 100-foot waterfall is one of the most popular waterfalls in the region.
- (3) Station Cove Falls- This stepped waterfall, located in the Tamassee area, has a listed height of 60 feet. An added attraction to the waterfalls is the number of wildflowers and native plants growing in the area.
- (4) Yellow Branch Falls- Accessible from the Yellow Branch Picnic Area off of Highway 28, this 50-foot vertical waterfall has often been overlooked in favor of those easier to reach. Recent trail improvements, however, have made Yellow Branch Falls potentially one of the most popular in the area.

- (5) Chauga Narrows- Seen by some as a waterfall, by others as a difficult whitewater rapid, the Chauga Narrows is a 25-foot drop of the Chauga River spaced within 200 feet. The Narrows is located in the Whetstone area.
- (6) Brasstown Falls- Situated to the west of Westminster on Brasstown Creek, this waterfall is composed of a series of drops over which the stream descends 120 feet.

Other named waterfalls include:

- a. Opossum Creek Falls
- b. Long Creek Falls
- c. Fall Creek Falls
- d. Riley Moore Falls
- e. Blue Hole Falls
- f. Lee Falls
- g. Licklog & Pigpen Falls
- h. Big Bend Falls
- i. Miuka Falls
- j. King Creek Falls
- k. Spoon Auger Falls
- l. Bee Cove Falls

Oconee County also offers a variety of other unique natural features. Scenic vistas can be found at many points throughout the mountainous areas of the county. Hikers can choose from many miles of trails, ranging in difficulty from easy nature trails to the challenging Foothills Trail, which spans 85 miles between Oconee State Park and Jones Gap State Park, in Greenville County, SC. Camping is available all across the county, with campsites available at state and county parks, Corps of Engineers campgrounds, designated Forest Service areas, and privately owned facilities. For the less adventurous, both the Savannah River Scenic Highway and the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway begin in Oconee County, providing motorists and bicyclists many miles of picturesque travel.

Analysis

Oconee County's natural resources have played a major role in shaping the lives of area residents. Too often, however, these assets have been ignored, taken for granted, or carelessly wasted and destroyed. In spite of this, recent social and economic changes have brought about an increased awareness and appreciation of these natural blessings. More and more, attention is being paid to efforts to protect, preserve and enhance these precious resources. To date, most local action has been on behalf of the private sector, for county government has taken little action to sustain the benefits received from the resources. While state and federal regulations do help, without complimentary local controls specifically crafted to fit the needs of Oconee County, the resources that area residents deem to be invaluable will continue to be unnecessarily threatened.

Water quantity and water quality go hand in hand. Oconee County not only needs to protect the quantity of the region's water but also the quality. What good is it to have a large quantity of water that is too polluted to use? To date, all new developments around the major lakes within the county must maintain a vegetative buffer of twenty-five feet along the shoreline. This helps to maintain water quality by filtering water before it reaches the lake. Some argue that twenty-five feet is not enough to achieve the desired results, and would like to see a buffer closer to fifty or even seventy five feet. Such ideas need to be considered seriously, possibly expanding the discussion to applying the buffer to all properties along the lakefront so that there is not just a patchwork of buffer areas along the shoreline. Consideration should also be given to looking at establishing buffer depths based on the slope of the land approaching the lake, the greater the slope the greater the buffer needed filter runoff. There also needs to be consideration of other ideas, such as best management practices that minimize fertilizer use on domestic lawns and golf courses near surface waters, and the establishment of more boat dump-stations on the lakes. Regardless of what we arrive at, Oconee County must proactively seek out those measures that will ensure our citizens will enjoy a future with the excellent quality and quantity needed for generations to come.

It should not be forgotten that, in spite of the many benefits Oconee County receives from its natural assets, some potential dangers do exist. The most obvious of these include tornados, floods, and earthquakes, all of which have struck Oconee County in the past, and will likely revisit the area in the future. Yet, though these threats may be initially devastating, the physical damage they bring is typically short-lived, for proper planning and training, combined with improvements in technology, have greatly lessened the overall impact of such natural disasters. Other recently recognized threats, however, have not been satisfactorily addressed. Radon, for example, has received little attention on the local level. Although some studies have indicated that Oconee County's geology favors the production of the carcinogen, the exact level of the threat has not been established. As a result, few residents have chosen to install protective measures against the invisible menace. As more information becomes available on the topic, however, Oconee County leaders may have to consider implementing stringent codes protecting county residents.

Also of recent concern is ground-level ozone, a dangerous pollutant that causes a number of breathing-related ailments. The problem occurs when two types of chemicals, volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, are exposed to warm temperatures. As such, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established standards

limiting these emissions under the Clean Air Act. Currently, Oconee County has been declared to be in attainment of this standard, but we need to remember that this may change in the future; for, not only will the level of our own growth potentially raise emission levels, but also the continued development of other regions. The fact is that political subdivision borders do not affect air pollution, so pollutants emitted in one region of the country are often carried long distances in the atmosphere, impacting air quality far from the source. That is generally seen to be the case in our area, for recent computer modeling has shown that much of Oconee County's ozone originates elsewhere. Therefore, only a coordinated, regional approach offers hope for a real solution. To this end, Oconee County has become a partner in the South Carolina Early Action Compact to reduce ozone-causing emissions. As a partner in this effort, Oconee County has been allowed to create its own plan of action in concert with other South Carolina counties. Because this is an ongoing effort with obligations extending at least into the next decade, county leaders need to remain cognizant that, if current efforts fail to achieve the needed reductions, additional actions may be necessary to avoid potentially burdensome federal and state mandates.

Another potential problem related to Oconee County's natural resources involves development in steep terrain. Given proper engineering and best management practices, most projects in steep areas can be done without adverse impacts. As these practices are often expensive, however, safeguards are sometimes ignored, resulting in the loss of valuable topsoil and vegetation, sedimentation of streams and lakes, and increased downstream flooding. Additionally, the steep areas of Oconee County typically have thinner soils, a condition which makes the installation and proper operation of septic tanks more complicated. Yet, in some areas, public sewer service will likely not be available for decades- if ever- meaning that septic tanks are going to be a fact of life in Oconee County for a long time into the future. Currently, regulation of such problems in Oconee County primarily falls within the State's authority. As development increases, however, county leaders will be forced to consider Oconee County's options for increasing protection of our natural resources at the local level.

Agriculture traditionally played a large role in the economy of Oconee County. Today, it continues to be seen as an invaluable part of the area's lifestyle and worthy of protection. In recent years, however, rapid development has led to the loss of many acres of the prime farmlands. While some change is to be expected as the number of agricultural operations shrink, unmanaged growth will likely result in an ever-increasing conflict between our remaining farmers and new residential development. The fact is, an increase in population density in farming areas increases the opportunity for incompatible land usage, for normal agricultural operations often result in smells, noise and dust that many people find offensive. Although it is not known if the solution will be found in working with individual communities to designate agricultural areas, or some other type of land use regulation, it is likely that unless local leaders take action, Oconee County will likely lose a cherished institution.

Natural resources are valuable to all Oconee citizens. Wise stewardship will be required in not only our generation but also in the generations that follow us. Conservation practices and policies will need to be look at often to ensure the best results. Conservation policies work best when all of the various stakeholders are present in the critiquing and establishing of the policies that protect our resources. Oconee County has a chance to take a leading role in protecting water quantity and quality by developing its own water plan and

using this plan as a step toward developing a complete guide to conserving Oconee's natural resources. The goals established by the Comprehensive Plan when acted upon will help preserve what we have been given for years to come.

Natural Resource Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Natural Resources Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Initiate efforts to develop the foundation of a county stormwater management program prior to federal mandates, thereby allowing for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation possible in the event of designation.
2. Establish a program of managing both water quantity and water quality throughout the county that will ensure efficient utilization, and appropriate conservation, of our greatest natural resource.
3. Preserve, protect and enhance Oconee County's environmentally sensitive lands, unique scenic views, agrarian landscapes, and topographic features.
4. Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands and scenic areas under pressure.
5. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
6. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
7. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Continue to closely monitor Oconee County's compliance with state and federal air-quality standards, adopting and maintaining reduction strategies as necessary.
11. Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation, and to promote ecotourism opportunities.

12. Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.

DRAFT



Cultural Resources Element

Introduction

This element considers those resources that serve to develop the intellectual, moral, and physical lives of Oconee residents. Among the items considered is the area's unique past, historic buildings and structures, unique natural and scenic resources, and other activities that improve the mind and body, such as recreation, music and the arts. These resources will be noted and described as objectively as possible in order to both promote an awareness of various cultural assets, and to encourage protection and utilization of forgotten and endangered resources.

A Brief Overview of the Origin of Oconee County

Note: The following overview highlights some of the key events in the origin of Oconee County. It is in no way to be taken as a comprehensive history of the region. Therefore, a number of events and people having an arguably significant impact on the county's history are not included in these paragraphs, for to attempt a comprehensive history of the region is beyond the scope of this document.

There are various accounts of the derivation of the name "Oconee". It is generally agreed, however, that the word was adopted from the Cherokee Indians, the Native American tribe occupying the area at the time European explorers first visited the region. Early records show the name was associated with a village, located near present-day Tamasee, variously spelled in colonial records as "Wocunny", "Wacunny", "Ukwunu", and "Acconee". Early maps of the area also show the European settlers used the name to denote a range of hills called "Wocunny Mountain". The spelling of the word, over time, was standardized to "Oconee". Regardless of its derivation, however, the word was associated with the region long before the 1868 birth of Oconee County.

The land now comprising Oconee County had been visited and inhabited for centuries when the first Europeans arrived. While there is nothing to indicate the exact time that humans first saw the region, there is evidence that wandering bands of hunters roamed over much of South Carolina in search of animals as early as between 8,000 B.C. to 12,000 B.C. At some point during the ensuing centuries, as people began to live a more agrarian lifestyle, the Oconee area became home to native peoples attracted by an abundant water supply, plentiful game, and fertile soils.

Among the first known Europeans to explore upper South Carolina was the Spanish explorer, Hernando DeSoto, who passed through the region in the 1530's. Though he did not travel through the area comprising modern Oconee County, he did make contact with some members of the Cherokee nation, the Native American tribe occupying the Oconee region at the time. Just how long the Cherokees had been in the area, however, is a matter of debate, for some believe that the Cherokees were relatively recent arrivals, having driven out another people only within the previous century or so- yet others claim they had occupied their Southern Appalachian home for many generations. In either case, it is known that the Oconee area was occupied for centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans, a fact testified to by countless arrowheads, stone axes, pottery shards, and other artifacts found throughout the county.

Although the French and Spanish had attempted to settle in South Carolina earlier, the English first established a permanent settlement in Charles Town (Charleston). Because the English venture to colonize the region was a commercial venture, trade with the native population was crucial. Soon, the English were venturing far into the upcountry to deal with various tribes, including the Cherokee in the Oconee area.

At the time the English arrived in South Carolina, the Cherokees living closest to the newcomers were part of what were known later as "Lower Town" Cherokees, those living in villages scattered across the eastern side of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The principle town during the early history of contact with the English was located at Tugalo Town. This village, which lay on the Tugalo River, was located on the present border between Oconee County and Stephens County, Georgia, and was the focus of many early trading and military missions from Charleston. A war between the Cherokees and the Creek Nation, however, eventually destroyed the village, and another village, Keowee Town, became the site of the principle town. This village, located on the western side of the Keowee River in modern Oconee County, served as the principle town of the Lower Town Cherokees until they were driven from the area in the late 1700's. The site of Keowee Town is today under the waters of Lake Keowee.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Native American population in what is now Oconee County had suffered greatly from both disease and war. As the ever-increasing European population moved closer to the suffering Cherokee population, depredations, initiated by both sides, led to a number of conflicts. And though peace would eventually return, treaties proved to be, at best, only temporary arrangements, soon violated by one side or the other. Finally, in 1776, a year marked by open conflict between the Cherokees and the Carolinians, Colonel Andrew Williamson led a large force of militia into the Oconee area, destroying all of the Cherokee villages that they could find. Among the leaders of the Williamson Campaign was future war hero and Oconee area resident Andrew Pickens, who, during one of the battles near present-day Tamassee, led a small group of militia in driving off a much larger Cherokee force near Tamassee in what has become known as the "Ring Fight". In the end, only names remained to denote the presence of the area's native population; among these, Essenecca (Seneca), Tamassee, Jocassee, Tugalo, Chehohee (Cheohee), Toxaway, and Oconee.

In 1785, the Cherokees ceded most of their South Carolina lands in the Treaty of Hopewell, signed near what is today the Oconee-Pickens border, on the Seneca River plantation of Andrew Pickens. The newly ceded lands, which were designated part of the Ninety-Six District of South Carolina, soon attracted large numbers of white settlers. Some

parcels of land were awarded by land grant to Revolutionary War veterans and their widows, while other lands were offered in lieu of payment for services in the conflict. Among the first group of settlers in the area was Revolutionary War hero Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, who settled near the confluence of the Tugalo and Chauga Rivers. A border disagreement between the new states of South Carolina and Georgia, however, threatened to disrupt settlement of the new lands. South Carolina, which claimed a vast amount of land running all the way to the Mississippi River, filed suit before Congress against its southern neighbor, who claimed lands west of the Seneca River for its own. In 1787, a convention was held in the city of Beaufort, South Carolina, to negotiate a treaty settling the issue. The Treaty of Beaufort, signed by representatives from South Carolina and Georgia, established the northwestern South Carolina border along the most western course of the Tugalo River, permanently delineating the southern and western boundaries of the region that is Oconee County.

The early settlers of the Oconee area included both recent immigrants and those whose families had lived for generations in other parts of America. Among those moving into the area in the 1780's and 90's, the majority traced their lineages to the British Isles, which included, of course, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Other Europeans, including Germans, Swiss, and French were also represented among the settlers. In addition, some white settlers brought African slaves into the area. It should be noted, however, that the number of slaves in the region never approached that of the lowcountry.

Over time, as the population of the region grew, the Oconee area underwent several governmental reorganizations. In 1789, for example, the region was designated as part of the newly created Pendleton County of the Ninety-Six District. In 1791, Pendleton County was annexed into the new Washington District. The courthouse and seat of government for the Washington District was located at Pickensville, which lay in the current-day town of Easley, in Pickens County (the town of Pickensville was destroyed by fire in 1817). In 1798, Pendleton County became the Pendleton District, with the courthouse and seat of government at the town of Pendleton, which had been established in 1790.

In the late 1820's, the area was reorganized once again, and the Pendleton District was divided into Pickens and Anderson Counties. The area comprising modern Oconee County was designated as the Western District of Pickens County, with the modern Pickens area comprising the Eastern District. To serve the governmental needs of Pickens County, a courthouse was constructed on the west bank of the Keowee River. The courthouse soon attracted businesses, churches, and other institutions to the area, and a town, naturally named Pickens Courthouse (today called "Old Pickens"), was established. Pickens Courthouse served the county for the next 40 years, growing at one time, according to some sources, to a population of approximately 1800 inhabitants, a relatively large community for the era.

During the mid-1800's, two new groups of people entered the Oconee area. In 1849, the German Colonization Society of Charleston purchased the land for what is now the town of Walhalla from Col. Joseph Grisham, one of the region's leading citizens (and father-in-law of Georgia's Civil War Era Governor, Joseph E. Brown). Soon thereafter, a growing community of German immigrants was established at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. At about the same time, in 1852, the South Carolina Legislature chartered the Blue Ridge Railroad with the purpose of constructing a railroad through the Blue Ridge Mountains. With plans to reach Knoxville, Tennessee, the project, if completed, would have directly

connected the region to the Tennessee Valley and beyond, greatly impacting the Oconee area's future.

The railroad project required the construction of several tunnels in the hills above the new town of Walhalla. This brought in a large number of workers, predominantly Irish immigrants, who established the town of Tunnel Hill. In spite of initial progress, however, the mountains were not breached when, in the period immediately preceding the Civil War, work on the project ceased. Without work for its residents, Tunnel Hill was abandoned, with most of the Irish leaving the area. Although some later efforts were made to revive the project, the railway through the mountains was never completed, leaving today's Stumphouse Tunnel as a public reminder of what could have been a major change in direction for Oconee County's history.

During the Civil War, hundreds of men from both the Eastern and Western Districts of Pickens County left their homes to fight. Like so many other areas of the South, many of the soldiers never returned, with wounds or disease claiming a heavy toll. The Oconee area, however, having no major industry or transportation artery to attract the attention of the Union army, escaped the devastation of battle that was visited on so many other areas of the South. Escaping the direct physical destruction of the conflict, however, did not mean that the region shirked its share of the load, for many area residents returned home with physical and emotional scars that remained with them for the rest of their lives.

In 1868, just three years after the end of the Civil War, the region underwent its final governmental reorganization, with the Eastern and Western Districts of Pickens County being separated along the established district lines into new counties. While the Eastern District maintained the name honoring Revolutionary War hero Andrew Pickens, the Western District was named Oconee, with its seat of government and courthouse being established in the town of Walhalla. The town of Pickens Courthouse, no longer a center of political and economic activity, gradually withered away and was abandoned. Today, only the Old Pickens Presbyterian Church, standing surrounded by dozens of graves on a tree-covered hillside above the Keowee River, remains to denote the existence of the once-thriving community.

In the years following the Civil War, Oconee County's agrarian economy was, as in much of the rest of the South, tied to one or two cash crops. In Oconee, these crops were cotton, the king of southern crops, and timber. Unlike many other areas, however, Oconee was blessed with assets not available to all. A railroad, the Airline Railroad, was built through Oconee County in the 1870's, leading to the establishment of the towns of Seneca and Westminster. By the turn of the century, the availability of rail transport, combined with an abundant water supply, access to raw materials, and a plentiful supply of labor began to attract the attention of the textile industry. Soon, Oconee County was home to a number of textile operations, providing jobs for thousands of area residents and dominating the area's economy until the latter part of the twentieth century.

The twentieth century saw many changes in Oconee County, with an economy based largely on agriculture and textiles evolving into one focused on high-tech industry, service businesses, nature-based recreation, and tourism. Development spurred on by the creation of the county's major lakes and energy projects permanently altered the county's landscape. Also, a dramatic increase in population occurred during the last several decades of the era, with thousands of people from other regions moving to the region. Farmland located throughout the county, sometimes belonging to the same family for close to two centuries,

suddenly became the site of residential and commercial developments. New businesses cropped up along the sides of the county's main transportation arteries, creating commercial corridors that likely will someday link the majority of the county's municipalities into a single urban area. And, of course, with these changes came new attitudes, values, and lifestyles that influenced all aspects of life in the county. By the end of the twentieth century, the formerly rural, agrarian county that many in South Carolina have so often called the "wild west" was no longer so wild, having joined other fast developing, increasingly urbanized areas of the state; yet retaining many of the assets that have made it special for so many centuries.

Areas of Historical Significance

Many sites of historical significance have survived from the early years of European settlement in the Oconee area. While some of these sites are special because they reflect the unique character and attitudes of those peoples that established them, all are irreplaceable historic treasures that have become an invaluable part of Oconee County's heritage.

There are currently sixteen sites on the National Register of Historical Places in Oconee County:

(Figure CR-1 shows the approximate location of each listing.)

- **Ellicott Rock**

Ellicott's Rock Wilderness Area, located in northern Oconee County, was designated in 1975 as South Carolina's first wilderness area. Included within the boundaries of the 9,012-acre area is Ellicott's Rock, which was delineated in 1811 by surveyor Andrew Ellicott as the point where the boundaries of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia join.

- **Alexander-Hill House**

Located at High Falls County Park, about 10 miles north of Seneca, off of Highway 183.



- **Keil Farm**

Located at 178 Keil Farm Road, Walhalla, this site is privately owned property.

- **Long Creek Academy**



Located on Academy Road, in the Long Creek Community. Established in 1914 as a school for underprivileged children in the mountainous regions of Oconee.

- **Newry Historic District**

Located off Highway 130, north of Seneca, Newry retains the architectural elements of a southern textile mill village of a bygone era. Established in 1893, this self-contained community was constructed to house workers of the then Courtney Manufacturing Company.



- **Oconee County Cage**

This iron-caged wagon was used as a jail in the early years of the county's history. Currently, the cage is designated to be part of the Oconee County Heritage Museum's displays.

- **Oconee Station and William Richards House**

Located at 500 Oconee Station Road, north of Walhalla, Oconee Station was built in 1792 as one in a series of blockhouse forts established to protect the growing



population of the area, and was used as an outpost for troops until 1799. The structure, which also served as an Indian trading post, lies adjacent to the William Richards House, which was built in 1805, and is believed to be the first brick building in northwest South Carolina. William Richards ran a prosperous Indian trading post on the site until his death in 1809.

- **Old Pickens Presbyterian Church**

Located off Highway 183 near the Pickens County line, the Old Pickens Presbyterian Church is the only structure still standing from what was once the town of Pickens, the

county seat of Pickens County before the Western District of the county was designated as Oconee County in 1868. Lying near the Oconee Nuclear Station at the base of the Lake Keowee Dam, the church stands as a reminder of a once progressive and thriving town along the Keowee River. The



church was chosen as the site for relocated graves moved from the valleys near the Keowee River before the impoundment of Lake Keowee. The churchyard is now the final resting place of dozens of early settlers, including Revolutionary War veterans John Craig and John Grisham (Grissom), prominent landowners, and ancestors of some of the leading citizens of the region.

- **Ram Cat Alley and Seneca Historic District**

Located in downtown Seneca, Ram Cat Alley lies at the heart of the original town, and retains turn-of-the-century architecture. The Seneca Historic District, roughly bounded by South First, South Third, and Poplar Streets, contains a wide variety of houses and churches dating from 1876 to 1926. Seneca, which was established when the Airline Railroad (now Norfolk Southern Railroad) was

completed in 1873, grew to be Oconee County's largest commercial center by the 1930's. As a result of the growth and development, many differing architectural styles were utilized. This variety is represented by such structures as the Seneca Baptist Church and Seneca Presbyterian Church, which exhibit brick facades and neo-classical design; while many houses in the area feature bungalow-style architecture, with the majority of their rooms situated on the ground floor fronted by a large porch.

- **Southern Railway Passenger Station**

Located at the Westminster Depot, 129 Main St., Westminster.

- **St. John's Lutheran Church**

Located at 301 W. Main St., Walhalla, this structure was constructed in 1853. With its bell tower and bright red door, St. John's serves as one of the main landmarks in the town of Walhalla. While necessary modernization and upgrades have occurred, the church retains much of its original architecture, including its pews, pulpit, and stained glass windows. The church is also notable for having the highest steeple of any church in the area. The cemetery is home to many Confederate and Revolutionary War soldiers.

- **Stumphouse Tunnel Complex**

Located approximately 5 miles west of Walhalla on Highway 28, Stumphouse Mountain Tunnel, which is currently managed by the Town of Walhalla, gets its name from a 1600-foot railroad tunnel begun as a result of an 1852 South Carolina Legislature charter to the Blue Ridge Railroad Company to build a connection between Charleston, South Carolina and Knoxville, Tennessee. The railroad was designed to connect existing tracks in Anderson, South Carolina, and Knoxville, Tennessee, via the Blue Ridge Mountains. One of the major obstacles to this was Stumphouse Mountain, which



required the construction of a tunnel through 5,863 feet of solid granite. By late 1858, track had been laid as far west as Pendleton, and plans were in the works to complete the track on to Walhalla. Due to the impending Civil War, however, construction on the tunnel ceased. After some poorly managed attempts to restart the project in the years following the war, the tunnel was abandoned. Besides being a locally well-known tourist attraction, the tunnel lays claim to being the location of the first successful site in the South for making blue mold cheese.

- **Walhalla Graded School**

Located at 101 E North Broad St., Walhalla.

- **McPhail Angus Farm**

Located off of Pine Grove Road, this site is privately owned property.

- Oconee State Park Historic District**

Located near Mountain Rest in the Blue Ridge foothills, this 1,200 acre park serves as the southern trailhead for the Foothills Trail, an 80 mile wilderness hike on the Blue Ridge Escarpment. The park was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) through a New Deal



program created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The CCC program was designed to create jobs during the Great Depression and helped develop many of the parks across the country. Several of the buildings located in the park were built by the CCC during the 1930's and are still in use.

- Russell House**

This site served as a late nineteenth and early twentieth century stage stop and inn for travelers between Walhalla and Highlands, N.C. The farmstead included 10 agricultural outbuildings, including a log barn, spring house, outhouse, garage, corn



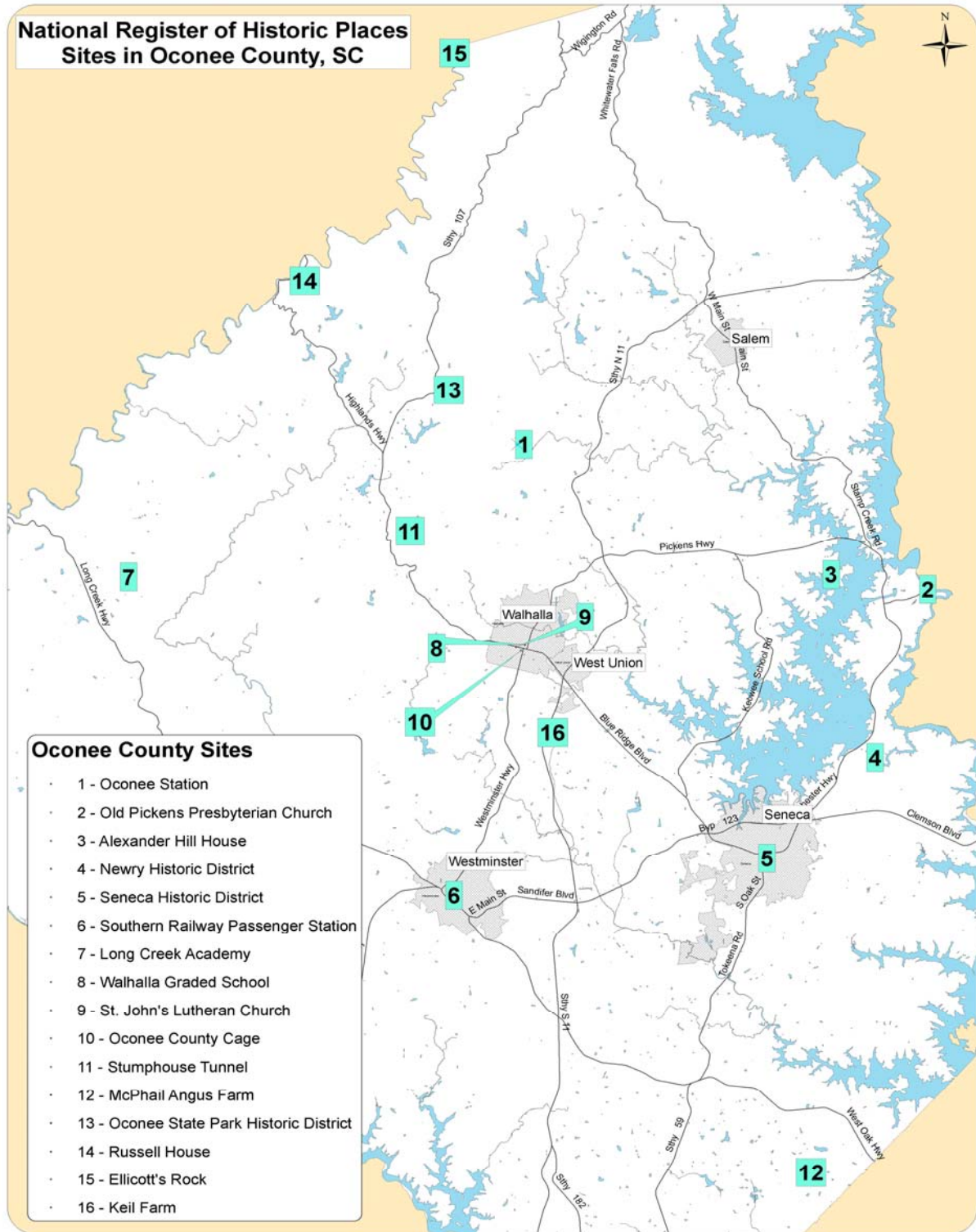
Farmstead, circa 1950's



Farmstead remnants, 2009

crib, and potato cellar, and a main house which served as the inn. The site was listed on the National Register on February 29, 1988 but the main house, two storage buildings, and a privy were destroyed by fire on May 14, 1988.

Figure CR-1



Source: Oconee County Planning Department

Other Oconee County Locations of Cultural and Historical Significance

Though not formally designated as a location of significance, many locations throughout Oconee County are notable for cultural, historical or architectural attributes. These include:

- Fort Madison Village: Located near Walton's Ford and the site of the Tugalo Town Village of the Cherokees, modern Fort Madison is situated on the banks of the Tugalo River, and emerged following the completion of the Airline Railroad in 1873.
- Horseshoe Robinson House: Home of the Revolutionary War hero 'Horseshoe' Robinson located a few miles from Westminster on Horseshoe Bridge Road..
- Ramey's Mill: A water-powered gristmill located on Cobb's Bridge Road, west of Westminster. The mill is currently inoperable.
- Pleasant Grove (Block) Church and School: This church and school, located at the intersection of Dr. Johns Road and Blackjack Road, near Westminster, takes its name from the "blockhouse" fort that served the congregation in its early history. Though the original blockhouse is long gone, the existing structures, particularly the adjacent one-room schoolhouse, are excellent examples of turn-of-the-century design.
- Retreat Baptist Church: This church was built about 1834, located on South Retreat Road, near Westminster. This wooden structure contains original brickwork and stained glass windows.
- Center Church: One of the earliest churches in the area, Center Church is located on Highway 24 between the Oakway and Tokeena communities.
- Westminster's Abby/Retreat Streets area is home to many structures exhibiting 19th Century architecture, including the Westminster Presbyterian Church, and the Ballenger, Grubbs, and McCormick houses. The town, incorporated in 1875, is the westernmost municipality in Oconee County.

Natural Resources

Dozens of scenic views can be found throughout Oconee County, many of which may be enjoyed from one of several Scenic Highways. The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway (Hwy. 11); the Savannah River Scenic Highway (Hwy. 24), part of the South Carolina Heritage Corridor; and National Scenic Highway 107 all serve as main routes through the county.

Oconee County hosts part of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, which extends 240 miles across South Carolina from the mountains of Oconee to the port of Charleston. The Heritage Corridor offers a cross-section of the state's history, culture, and

natural landscapes by showcasing the evolution of regional life, from plantations and farms to mill villages and urban centers.

A large portion of Oconee County's forested land lies within the boundaries of the Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest. This 79,000-acre district encompasses mountains, waterfalls, and a multitude of other scenic features.

The Chattooga River is one of a handful of free-flowing streams of its size found in the Southeast. The survival of the Chattooga's dense forest and undeveloped shorelines are due in large part to its May 10, 1974, congressional designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The designation, reserved for rivers possessing not only spectacular scenery, but also recreation, wildlife, geologic, and cultural values, restricts all motorized vehicles and development within a corridor of about ¼-



mile on either side of the river. The stream itself is regarded as a whitewater paddler's paradise, with spectacular mountain scenery and elevation changes averaging 49.3 feet per mile. Beginning in the Appalachian Mountains and concluding at Lake Tugaloo, the Chattooga River is widely recognized as one of the premier rivers in the nation.

The Chauga River Wild and Scenic Area is comprised of 3,274 acres of rugged terrain and beautiful scenery. With approximately 10 miles of the river flowing through public lands, many opportunities exist for a wide variety of recreational usage. The Chauga, a tributary of the Tugaloo River that generally flows parallel to the larger Chattooga River, enters the backwaters of Lake Hartwell west of Westminster.

The Jocassee Gorges, a 33,000-acre wilderness area, was created by a South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) purchase of pristine mountain land around Lake Jocassee, which lies in northern Oconee County. The result of collaboration between public agencies and private organizations, the DNR purchase of the Gorges preserved the region's unique ecological systems by permanently protecting the lands from development. This protected area harbors a great diversity of plant and animal species, including the rare Oconee Bell flower, a significant Black Bear population, and Peregrine Falcons. The area, part of approximately 30,000 square miles of protected wilderness lands in the Southern Appalachians, is available for some limited recreational usage, such as hiking, fishing, camping and hunting. The Foothills Trail, one of the upcountry's most popular natural attractions, also winds through the area.

Lake Jocassee, a 7,500-acre reservoir of cold, clear water lying primarily in northern Oconee County, was formed when the Duke Power Company dammed the Toxaway and Horse Pasture Rivers in 1973. The 385-foot dam not only provides water for hydroelectric power



generation, but also creates an exceptionally scenic reservoir that provides visitors with a number of outdoor recreational opportunities, such as swimming, water skiing, sailing, scuba diving and fishing. Several waterfalls are also accessible from the lake, including the Laurel Fork, Lower

Whitewater, and Thompson River Falls.

Lake Keowee, sister lake of Jocassee, was the first of the Duke Power Company lakes developed as part of the Keowee-Toxaway complex, and serves both the Oconee Nuclear Station and the Keowee hydroelectric station. Lake Keowee's 300-mile shoreline sports a wide variety of fish, including white, smallmouth and largemouth bass, black crappie, bluegill and threadfin shad. Lake Keowee is also renowned for its exclusive lake communities, with large numbers of new residents from other regions, many retirees, having made the shores of the lake their home.

Lake Hartwell's 56,000 acres were created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1955 and 1963, and serves as part of the Georgia-South Carolina border on the Savannah, Tugaloo and Seneca Rivers. The Corps maintains over 20 recreation areas on the lake's 962-mile shoreline, with many featuring launching ramps, comfort stations, picnic areas and shelters, swimming beaches, and playgrounds. Lake Hartwell is consistently ranked as one of the most popular Corps lakes in the nation.

Waterfalls

Oconee County's abundant water supply, combined with the areas's hilly topography, results in a large number of streams that drastically change elevation over a short distance. Rapids and waterfalls, therefore, are quite common throughout the county. In fact, Oconee County possesses approximately 1/3 of the named waterfalls found in upstate South Carolina. These include:

- *Issaqueena Falls
- *Brasstown Falls
- *Opossum Creek Falls
- *Long Creek Falls
- *Fall Creek Falls



- *Riley Moore Falls
- *Blue Hole Falls
- *The Chauga Narrows
- *Yellow Branch Falls
- *Station Cove Falls
- *King Creek Falls
- *Lee Falls
- *Licklog & Pigpen Falls
- *Big Bend Falls
- *Miuka Falls
- *King Creek Falls
- *Spoonauger Falls
- *Bee Cove Falls
- *Lower Whitewater Falls



Parks

County Parks:

Oconee County manages three parks: High Falls County Park, South Cove County Park and Chau Ram County Park. The oldest of these, High Falls, which is located on the shores of Lake Keowee near Highway 183, was established in 1972, and takes its name from a waterfall on the Little River (now an arm of the lake). Included within the park's 60 acres are a number of attractions, including 100 campsites; facilities for tennis, volleyball, and carpet golf; a swimming area; and picnic tables. In addition, High Falls is also the site of the historic Alexander Cannon-Hill House (circa 1814), which originally stood on the banks of the Keowee River, but was relocated to the park upon completion of the lake.

South Cove County Park, which opened in 1974, is located on Lake Keowee near Seneca. The park possesses a wide range of recreational opportunities, including 88 campsites, facilities for tennis, volleyball, and carpet golf; and picnic areas and a swimming

beach. In addition, there is an easily accessible boat launch with plentiful parking, and a fishing pier. South Cove is often utilized for hosting festivals, fishing tournaments, and other public events.

Chau Ram County Park, located at the confluence of the Chauga River and Ramsey Creek, opened in 1974, and is the least developed of the three county parks. This is not to say, however, that it does not have its share of amenities. Chau Ram has a number of camp sites, located in both developed and wilderness areas. It also has hiking trails, a picnic area, and a beautiful waterfall. The Chauga River, a stocked trout habitat, offers excellent fishing opportunities, and hosts one of the few whitewater slalom courses in the area.

State Parks:

Oconee County is the only county in the state to have four state parks. These include Devils Fork State Park, Lake Hartwell State Park, Oconee State Park, and Oconee Station State Park.

Devils Fork State Park, named for a nearby stream, was created in 1990, making it one of the newest parks in the system. The 622-acre park lies on the shores of Lake Jocassee, and boasts a number of waterfalls located throughout its area. Like most state parks, it offers



camping, fishing, swimming, and other traditional outdoor recreational opportunities. In addition, Devil's Fork offers a number of rental villas, as well as offering scuba diving facilities for those individuals desiring to explore the exceptionally clear waters of Lake Jocassee. Devil's Fork is special for many reasons, but perhaps the greatest reason is the fact that 95% of the world's population of Oconee Bells, a very rare, delicate wildflower, exists within the park's boundaries.

Lake Hartwell State Park, located near I-85 on Scenic Highway 11, contains 680 acres stretching along 14 miles of Lake Hartwell's shoreline. With 148 campsites and 2 boat ramps, this park is very popular with 56,000-acre Lake Hartwell's anglers. In addition, the park offers opportunities for picnicking, hiking, and swimming.

Oconee State Park, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's, draws users from a wide area. Located near the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River, the park's 150 campsites often serve as a base camp for whitewater enthusiasts. In addition, the park is connected to the Foothills Trail, one of the major hiking trails in the Southeast. For those with a less-adventurous nature, the park offers a museum, archery range, carpet golf, playground, cabins, and two private lakes for swimming, fishing, and paddling rental boats. Oconee State Park has consistently proven to be one of the premier state parks in the system.

Oconee Station State Park is located in northern Oconee County on the grounds of the Oconee Station, a frontier blockhouse constructed in the 1790's, and the Richards House, one of the oldest brick structures in the area. This relatively isolated park is ideal for those individuals wishing to get away from some of the more crowded public facilities and enjoy a

more natural setting. With its 1.5-mile nature trail (one way) and fishing pond, this park is an excellent picnic spot that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

Municipal Parks:

In addition to county and state parks located in Oconee County, the various municipalities operate a number of city parks and recreation areas. These include, among others, Seneca's Shaver Recreation Complex, Walhalla's Sertoma Recreation Field, and Westminster's Hall Street Ball Fields.

Cultural Facilities

Although Oconee County remains a largely rural area, it possesses a number of cultural resources that serve to both educate and enrich the lives of its residents. These include:

- Lunney Museum- Located at 211 W. South First St. in Seneca, the museum is an early 1900's style bungalow that displays Victorian furniture, period costumes, and other items of Oconee memorabilia.
- England's General Merchandise Museum- Located at 103 W. Main St. in Westminster, this former retail store contains over 2,000 items from a bygone era, including antique toys, clothes, glassware, medical equipment, photos and other items unique to the area.
- Blue Ridge Art Gallery- Located at 111 E. South 2nd St. in Seneca, the gallery offers an extensive collection of watercolors, oil paintings, and sculptures. The majority of the artists represented in the gallery are Oconee residents.
- Duke Power's World of Energy- Located near Seneca at 7812 Rochester Hwy on the banks of Lake Keowee, the World of Energy is a hands-on, self-guided facility that illustrates how electricity is generated using water, coal and uranium. The facility is also a popular venue for meetings and public activities.
- Tamasee DAR School- Founded by the South Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution in 1919, this school, located off Scenic Highway 11 in Tamasee, was established to provide a facility for educating children living in the isolation of northwestern SC.
- Oconee Cultural Heritage Center- Located in downtown Walhalla near the Oconee County Courthouse, this recent addition to the county's cultural landscape is a historical museum focused on presenting the story of the lives of all groups of people that helped to shape Oconee County.

Libraries

The Oconee County Public Library system currently operates four libraries in the county. These include the main branch in Walhalla, and satellite branches in Salem, Seneca and Westminster. The system also provides a bookmobile service to outlying rural areas.

Churches

As in many areas of the South, the Judeo-Christian tradition has always played a large role in the lives of the residents of Oconee County. This continues to be true today, with approximately 200 churches of various denominations located in the county. While the vast majority is Protestant, a growing number of individuals, particularly among those individuals relocating to Oconee County from other regions, adhere to other beliefs.

Festivals

Oconee County celebrates its rich culture and history in a number of festivals each year. These include:

- **Oktoberfest-** Held each autumn in Walhalla, the Oktoberfest celebrates the town's German heritage with traditional food, music, and recreation.
- **The South Carolina Apple Festival-** Established in 1961, the Apple Festival celebrates the beginning of apple season in Oconee County, the largest apple producing area in the state. Beginning on Labor Day, and continuing through the following weekend, this Westminster festival celebrates the importance of the apple crop to Oconee County's agricultural economy.
- **The Spring Heritage Festival-** Held annually in Seneca in and around historic Ram Cat Alley, this festival's events include the Miss Oconee and Palmetto Princess pageants.
- **Native American Day Festival-** This annual festival, held at Oconee Station State Park, celebrates the strong ties the area has to its Native American past.
- **Mountain Rest Hillbilly Day-** This Independence Day event has been held in the Mountain Rest community for many years, focusing on traditional mountain music, food, and fun.

Arts & Humanities

The Oconee County School District supports a countywide arts education program, which was awarded the Elizabeth O'Neil Verner Award for Excellence in Arts Education in 1993. In addition to the public school system, a number of other agencies and organizations promote art appreciation and education throughout the county. These include:

- **The Oconee County Arts & Historical Commission-** A county supported, non-profit agency that funds numerous cultural and art events throughout the year.

- The Oconee Community Theatre- Located at 8001 Utica St. in Seneca, the theatre showcases local actors in several productions each year.
- The Blue Ridge Art Council- The council works to expand understanding, awareness and participation in the arts in Oconee County.
- The Oconee County Historical Society- The Historical Society is an organization involved in ongoing research about Oconee and neighboring counties.

Analysis

Life in modern Oconee County is unique. The influence of the area's inhabitants' wide-ranging beliefs and traditions, combined with an abundance of natural resources, has created a lifestyle not found in many other regions.

The Oconee County area has played many roles over the centuries: a home to various native peoples, a key link in the economic health of colonial Carolina, a battleground in the Cherokee Wars, a frontier settlement area for a young South Carolina, home to a number of regional and national leaders, and a player in the textile industry. Today, Oconee is increasingly a region of natural resource-based recreation, retirement communities, and high-tech industry. These changes have all left their marks, combining to create what is undoubtedly a unique cultural tradition.

Evidence of the area's cultural wealth can be found in the variety of Oconee's listings on the National Register of Historic Places. The differing types and styles of buildings, a tunnel complex, a prison wagon, and a rock marking the intersection of three states testify to a diversity not found in many other places. It must be recognized, however, that many historical and cultural landmarks have been lost forever in recent decades. Prather's Covered Bridge on the Tugalo River was lost to arson, as was the Russell House on the Highlands Highway, and dozens of farmsteads now under the area's lakes are treasures that can never be reclaimed.

The large number of people moving into the county from other regions is increasing Oconee's cultural diversity. Of these new residents, perhaps the most obvious group is composed of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, who bring with them ideas and traditions formerly unknown in the area. These differences, often compounded by a language barrier, sometimes lead the newcomers to be seen negatively by established residents. This negative attitude increases the possibility that the newcomers, denied acceptance by a significant portion of the county's population, will become isolated on the margins of the social structure. As a result, it is possible that a very talented people with a tremendously rich cultural heritage will be excluded from taking a full part in life in Oconee County, thereby negating many of the potential benefits that might otherwise be enjoyed by all.

Although Oconee is blessed with a large number of natural and man-made resources of cultural and historical value, the area has traditionally been under-marketed. While widely recognized for its rivers and mountains by outdoor enthusiasts, other groups are less informed about the many resources available within the county. The result is that many resources are oftentimes ignored.

One valuable resource that has not received its due attention in past years is the county's scenic highways. The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway, in particular, is in need of better management policies to maintain its scenic designation.

Oconee finds itself in a unique position. With upstate South Carolina currently undergoing steady and above average growth, the cultural and natural resources that Oconee possesses provides the county with the potential to be marketed as a historical and natural resources paradise. Proper protection and management of these resources, combined with a professional approach to spreading the word, should allow Oconee to set itself apart from the rest of the region as a magnet for new industry, residential development, and additional investment. If this is to become a reality, however, it must be a priority to discover and document all aspects of Oconee County's historical and cultural treasures in order that these valuable assets may be protected and utilized in the best manner possible.

As Oconee's resources are brought to the attention of a wider audience, it should be understood that many of Oconee County's cultural resources require special attention to avoid damage from some of the very changes being sought. Increased development and growth within the county, for example, may threaten areas of value as historical or natural resources. As a result, many treasures may be encroached upon and have some of their attributes diminished due to unwise or poorly planned development. Any efforts at marketing the county's resources need to be carefully managed to insure that the resources are well protected, thereby improving life for all residents, and not just benefiting investors.

Some specific areas of concern include, as previously stated, Oconee County's scenic highways, which, if appropriate management policies are not enacted to preserve their natural beauty, may possibly be in danger of losing their official designation. Other areas as well, such as the county and state parks, and the areas near the Sumter National Forest, need increased attention to manage properly the pressures of growth. Such areas play a pivotal role for the county by not only providing recreation for Oconee's residents and visitors, but also provide an economic boost for the county. Finally, if the county's population continues to grow as is predicted, then the county's parks system will need to be upgraded and expanded, with the development of new parks becoming necessary.

Overall, Oconee County has a tremendous potential to utilize its existing cultural and historical resources to enhance the area's industrial recruitment and residential development. If not properly managed, however, these cultural treasures may be negatively impacted by the efforts. In addition, a decision must be made regarding what cultural treasures are too valuable to lose to forces of neglect and time. Progressive action, not reaction, should drive the preservation of our cultural heritage. In doing so, the unique culture of Oconee County will be insured far into the future.

Cultural Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Cultural Resources Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
2. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
3. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
4. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
5. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
6. Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.
7. Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.



Community Facilities Element

Overview

This element focuses on the activities and entities that are essential to maintaining Oconee County's health, safety, growth and quality lifestyle. These include government facilities and infrastructure, fire protection, health and emergency medical services, education, libraries, and cultural facilities. This element will also include statements of goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County.

In recent years, Oconee County has continued to experience rapid population growth and development, resulting in increased demands on community facilities. Governmental facilities have been expanded to provide much needed space for the Department on Health and Social Services for example. Continued renovations and maintenance of existing facilities have continued to be part of the ongoing work of the County. Several changes have occurred in the area of Emergency Management and Fire Service throughout the County, which will serve the County well in the years to come. As we move toward the future, we must continue to look for opportunities, which will improve the overall government facilities and infrastructure, fire protection, health and emergency medical services, education, libraries, and cultural facilities.

Form of Government

Oconee County is governed under the Council-Administrator form of government. Oconee County Council acts as the county's legislative body, and is composed of five members elected by voters in respective districts. The Council's responsibilities include establishing policies, setting taxation levels, and guiding the county's growth within the limits of state and federal law. To execute adopted policies, directives and legislative actions, the Council employs an Administrator, the county's chief administrative officer. The Administrator's duties include directing and coordinating activities of county agencies, preparation of budgets, supervision of expenditures, enforcement of personnel policies, and the responsibility for employment and discharge of personnel. (Home Rule Handbook for County Government, 2000 Edition, South Carolina Association of Counties).

Governmental Facilities

Table CF-1 lists governmental facilities owned or maintained by Oconee County.

Table CF-1

Governmental Office Facilities Owned or Maintained by Oconee County		
Facility	Location	Usage
Oconee County Court House	Walhalla	Courts, Offices
Pine Street Administrative Complex	Walhalla	Administrative Offices
Oconee County Economic Development	Walhalla	Office
Agricultural Building	Walhalla	Offices
Department of Social Services Building	Walhalla	Offices
Oconee County Health Department	Walhalla	Health and Environmental Offices, Clinic
The Rock Building	Walhalla	Offices
Westminster Magistrate's Office (County Maintained)	Westminster	Court, Office
Seneca Magistrate's Office (County Maintained)	Seneca	Court, Office
Public Works Facilities	Seneca	Road and Bridges
Solid Waste Facility	Seneca	Waste Management
Vehicle Maintenance Facility	Seneca	Vehicle Service and Repair
Brown Square	Walhalla	Office Space or Storage
DSS Building (previously Next Day Apparel)	Walhalla	Social Services

Source: Oconee County Planning Department

As Table CF-1 shows, most of Oconee County's governmental office facilities are county owned, with only the magistrate's offices in Westminster and Seneca leased. While the majority of all governmental offices in Oconee County have traditionally been located in the town of Walhalla, the county seat, until the late 1990's they were scattered in various buildings near the courthouse. In 1999, however, most governmental offices were relocated to the Pine Street Administrative Complex. As a result, the citizens of Oconee County are able to conduct most governmental business in one location. Soon after relocation of the county governmental offices, the Oconee County School District began planning to construct their new administrative facility across the street from the Pine Street Complex, further centralizing governmental offices.

Oconee County continues to improve the location and efficiency of government offices. Several departments have relocated to more efficient locations and buildings. The County's Road and Bridges Department, Solid Waste, and the Vehicle Maintenance Facilities are now all located on Wells Highway in the Seneca area. The County also acquired and renovated the former Next Day Apparel building on Kenneth Street in Walhalla. Widely hailed as a model of efficient use of existing space, the project cost less than three million dollars to renovate into an attractive, modern facility. The 75,000 square foot structure is currently occupied by the local office of the State Department of Social

Services, Department of Health and Human Services (approx. 39,000 sq. ft.), and the County Facilities Maintenance Department (approx. 10,000 sq. ft.), with adequate room for at least one or two more agencies in the future.



In the summer of 2001, ground was broken to construct a new courthouse facility in Walhalla. Situated adjacent to the existing structure, the new facility offers much needed space for both judicial and administrative operations. The new structure, planned in a different era than the old courthouse, reflects the requirements of dealing with life in the 21st Century. As a result, the new structure includes both well-designed passive protective measures and state-of-the-art security systems. Although completed in 2003, problematic

issues related to design and construction is still being resolved. When complete, the facility will serve the citizens of Oconee County for generations to come.

Other changes have come with the expansion and modernization of governmental facilities. Among the most notable has been the greater reliance on computers and other associated information technology. To coordinate and facilitate this upgrade, an Information Technology Department was created in 2000. Under the direction of this department, county government is using state of the art technology to become more efficient and accessible to the citizens of Oconee through improved existing facilities, as well as newly created ones. Chief among these new tools is the Internet, which allows the public not only to access information 24 hours a day, but also increasingly to conduct necessary business without leaving their homes. In addition, the county's geographical information system (GIS), begun soon after the move to Pine Street, will provide both county government and the public with information about Oconee that was never before available, allowing for better planning and operation in all aspects of county life.

Municipal government facilities are not included in Table CF-1. These are typically located within the jurisdictional limits of the various municipalities.

Libraries

Oconee County boasts a modern library system that has, since 1948, grown to include not only the main library in Walhalla, but also branches in Seneca, Westminster and Salem. In addition to governmental support, the Oconee County Friends of the Library was organized in 1986 to provide services in the areas of financial and volunteer support to supplement the libraries' resources and to stimulate community awareness, use, and involvement with the libraries. The main branch, located in Walhalla, is open seven days a week, and served 228,615 visitors during 2008. Of those, 32,941 were registered cardholders who checked out 293,999 books, CDs, DVDs, magazines, and books-on-tape. In addition, 44,556 people signed in to use the 36 public internet computer terminals at the library. It was a recent recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities *Picturing America* grant.

Oconee's libraries utilize an internet-based catalog system, enabling them to take advantage of the latest information technology. Users of the library system can log



in to the library websites to search, view, and request library materials online. Computers are available to the public for access to the Internet, and wireless technology has been made available in each of the branches, as of August 2009.



The system also operates a bookmobile service to offer materials to residents in rural areas of the county. Along with the bookmobile service, the library offers a summer reading program for youth and adults alike. The program includes creative reading activities designed for specific age groups, as well as events such as Family Movie Night for the whole family at the main library. In addition to its regular holdings, the library system

maintains a collection of area maps dating from the early 1700's, microfilm copies of local newspapers and census records, and genealogical and historical materials from the county. The main library is also a depository for public records related to the Oconee Nuclear Station.

The Oconee County Library Board has been working to update the library facilities in Seneca for a number of years. The Oconee County School District has volunteered to donate land adjacent to the newly built Blue Ridge Elementary School in Seneca. Under the proposal, increased staffing would be added to serve the new library. The Library Plan has also stressed the need for an additional county library in the Fair Play area and they are continuing to work to make that facility a reality.

Other area libraries include the Cooper Library at Clemson University, which houses over 1.5 million books, periodicals and microforms; and the Tri-County Technical College Library, which contains over 35,000 volumes.

Public Safety

The Emergency Management Agency was created in 1980 by the Oconee County Council to insure the complete and efficient utilization of all county facilities to combat disaster from enemy attack or natural disaster. In 2007, County Council consolidated the various agencies and created the Emergency Services Protection Department to coordinate Emergency Management, Rescue, Fire, and Hazmat. The mission of Emergency Management is to protect the people and resources in the county by minimizing damage, injury, and loss of life that results from any type of disaster, provide for the continuity of government, and provide damage assessment in the event of emergencies.

Fire Protection

There are currently seventeen fire districts in Oconee County, with the county providing equipment for fire protection in the unincorporated areas of the districts. Table CF-2 shows the fire stations located in Oconee County, the type of service offered, and the fire insurance classification issued by the Insurance Service Office (ISO Rating) for areas within the various districts.

Table CF-2

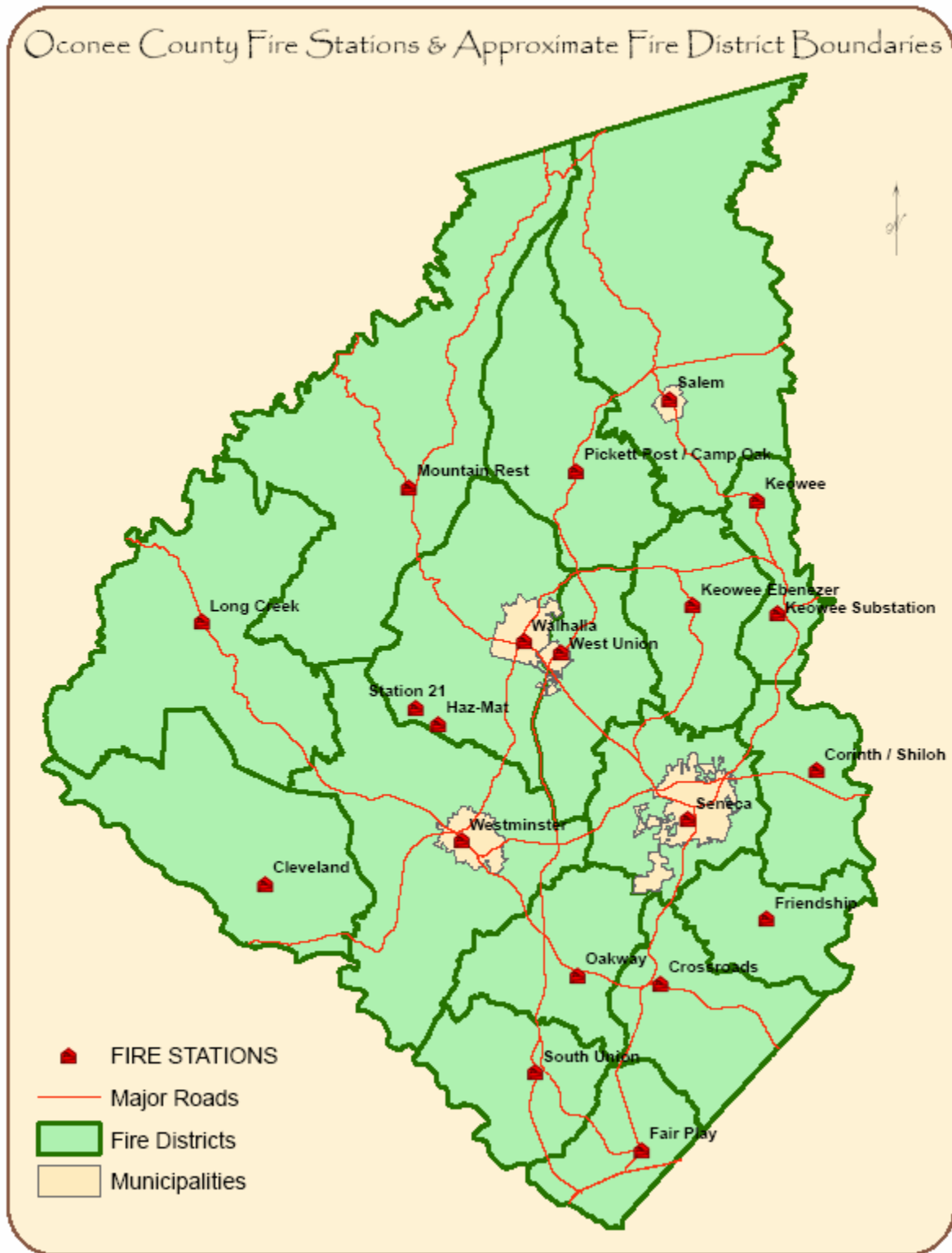
Oconee County Fire Stations				
Station Number	Location (See Map CF-1)	Type of Service (Volunteer or Full-Time)	ISO Rating (April, 2002)	
			Areas within 1000' of hydrant/not over 5 miles road travel from station	All other
1	Oakway	Volunteer	7	9
2	Salem	Volunteer	7	9
3	Corinth-Shiloh	Volunteer	7	9
4	Mt. Rest	Volunteer	7	9
5	Walhalla	Full-Time	4	9
6	Westminster	Full-Time	5	9
7	Seneca	Full-Time	3	9
8	Fair Play	Volunteer	9	6
9	Long Creek	Volunteer	9	9
10	Cleveland	Volunteer	9	9
11	Keowee-Ebenezer	Volunteer	7	9
12	Friendship	Volunteer	5	9
13	Cross Roads	Volunteer	8	9
14	Pickett Post-Camp Oak	Volunteer	7	9
15	South Union	Volunteer	7	9
16	West Union	Volunteer	5	9
17	Keowee	Full Time	4	4

Source: Oconee County Fire Marshal's Office

Table CF-2 shows that there are four full-time fire departments in Oconee County, with the personnel paid for by the various municipalities or, in the case of Keowee, by revenues collected from a special purpose district. Not shown in the chart is Station #21, which was established in 2007 as a paid county station to respond as back up to all volunteer stations on structure fires. The chart also lists the various ISO Ratings for each station, which, for Oconee County, ranges from four to nine, with the lowest found in Seneca, and the highest found in the rural areas farthest from hydrants and a fire station. Used as factors in determining the cost of fire insurance for homeowners residing in the districts, the lower ratings are better.

Figure CF-1 illustrates the approximate location of each fire station.

Figure CF-1



Source: Oconee County Planning Department

Law Enforcement

The unincorporated areas of Oconee County are under the protection of the Oconee County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff, who serves as an elected official, manages a staff of deputies and administrative personnel headquartered at the Oconee County Law Enforcement Center on South Church Street in Walhalla. Although the majority of deputies are focused on patrol duties, a number of different specialties exist within the department. Among these are investigators, narcotics officers, courthouse security, family court officer, civil processors, community services, and beginning in 2001, traffic enforcement.

Oconee County municipalities, with the exception of Salem, maintain their own police departments to provide law enforcement within their jurisdictions. The Oconee County Sheriff's Department serves the town of Salem. Table CF-3 provides a breakdown of Oconee County crime statistics for selected years.

Table CF-3

Reported Crime in Oconee County								
Agency	Year	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Breaking & Entering	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
Oconee Sheriff's Office	2001	0	12	7	191	278	572	78
	2002	4	22	13	211	344	700	102
	2005	1	24	7	209	483	877	114
	2006	3	24	10	216	321	729	83
	2007		27	16	253	388	752	105
Seneca Police	2001	1	3	7	43	64	494	22
	2002	0	3	6	55	57	381	21
	2005	0	5	14	79	96	416	34
	2006	0	6	13	77	118	325	27
	2007	0	4	8	59	69	444	29
Walhalla Police	2001	0	1	0	69	18	97	14
	2002	1	0	0	30	22	72	3
	2005	0	2	3	22	21	98	9
	2006	0	1	2	14	30	77	5
	2007	0	2	7	23	26	103	4
Westminster Police	2001	0	0	0	23	9	22	3
	2002	0	0	0	29	39	124	7
	2005	0	0	0	12	12	57	3
	2006	0	3	3	8	9	41	1
	2007	0	0	9	18	25	67	3
West Union Police	2001	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
	2002	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
	2005	0	0	0	0	0	3	1

	2006	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
	2007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salem Police	2001	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2002	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2005	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
	2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comparison of Reported Crime by Agency								
Agency	Year	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Breaking & Entering	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
Oconee County Totals	2001	1	16	14	326	370	1187	117
	2002	5	25	19	327	466	1277	133
	2005	1	31	24	323	612	1453	114
	2006	3	31	28	315	479	1174	83
	2007	0	33	40	353	508	1367	141
Pickens County Totals	2001	6	35	46	306	631	1896	190
	2002	1	37	34	301	760	1943	253
	2005	2	36	26	324	955	2789	316
	2006	6	36	33	280	772	2401	307
	2007	1	45	46	343	886	2671	326
Anderson County Totals	2001	15	71	172	857	1917	4970	520
	2002	14	80	163	960	1810	5235	732
	2005	16	72	157	839	1912	5843	805
	2006	18	91	162	890	1860	5426	767
	2007	5	63	140	971	2585	5855	895
Greenville County Totals	2001	35	150	575	2193	3402	11236	1152
	2002	30	197	576	2261	3470	10652	1232
	2005	30	187	635	2427	4131	11484	1629
	2006	26	147	633	2368	4525	11008	1733
	2007	30	151	761	2357	4529	11617	1822

Source: South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division

*no data available

One of the major issues facing law enforcement throughout the county is the existing jail facility. This facility is currently inadequate for housing the number of male and female populations. At the time of this writing, the County is reviewing options that will meet state and federal requirements, with appropriate determinations to be made in the near future.

Emergency Medical

Emergency medical service in Oconee County is provided in conjunction with the Oconee Medical Center, whose ambulance fleet and paramedics are available 24 hours per day. In addition, mutual aid is provided to Anderson and Pickens Counties in South Carolina, and Rabun and Stephens Counties in Georgia.

Six rescue squad divisions are located throughout Oconee County to provide support to the primary emergency service. These units are located in the following communities:

- a. Mountain Rest
- b. Oakway
- c. Salem
- d. Seneca
- e. Walhalla
- f. Westminster

Three additional sub-stations are located at Keowee Key, Fair Play School, and the Long Creek Fire Department. Oconee County provides vehicles, training, and supplies for the units, which are staffed by approximately 150 volunteers. Among these are special squads trained for diving, swift water rescues, high angle rescues, and rappelling.

Because of the proximity to Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee, scenic rivers and waterfalls that increases public use and access to recreational waters, the Oconee County Emergency Rescue staff encounter unique situations that require special training and skills. In addition to providing fire safety coverage on the lakes during the 4th of July weekend, the staff also provide lake safety patrol coverage throughout the year. During 2008, the staff responded to 4 drownings, 3 medical responses with transport on the lakes, 2 boat recoveries, 1 cardiac emergency, and 30 search and rescues. The rescue squad was dispatched to 4,305 calls during 2008.

(Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997 and www.oconeesc.com/emprep/rescue_squads.htm)

Health Services

The cornerstone of Oconee County's healthcare system is the Oconee Medical Center, which recently completed a new 155-bed patient tower. Located in Seneca, the hospital has ten centers of service, which include the Outpatient Infusion Center, Clemson Health Center, Women's Services, Surgical Services, Rehabilitation Services, Emergency Services,



Pain Management, Diagnostic Services, the Lila Doyle Long Term Care Facility, and Inpatient Services. In addition, the hospital is involved in a number of community outreach programs, including Oconee Kids Health, NurseFirst Family Health Center, Occupational Health, OMH HomeCare Network, and Medication Access. (2003-2004 Oconee County Profile, Appalachian Council of Governments)

Oconee County is also home to a wide variety of other healthcare related operations, including various residential and nursing care facilities, a dialysis clinic, a blood donation facility, a sports medicine practice, and a number of other medical specialists. The Division of Health Licensing of the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control licenses a number of health facilities located across Oconee County. Table CF-4 (below) provides information about these facilities.

Table CF-4

Health Facilities in Oconee County			
Facility	Type of Care	Operator	Number of Beds/Stations/Participants
Oconee Adult Day Care Center	Adult Day Care	Anderson-Oconee Council on Aging	50
Blue Ridge Surgery Center	Ambulatory Surgery	Blue Ridge/Clemson Orthopedic Assn, LLC	4
Oconee Community Residence 1	Intermediate Care for Mentally Retarded	S.C. Dept. of Disabilities and Special Needs	8
Oconee Community Residence 2	Intermediate Care for Mentally Retarded	S. C. Dept. of Disabilities and Special Needs	8
Oconee Home Health	Home Health	Oconee Medical Center	3
Oconee Hospice of the Foothills Cottingham House	Hospice	Oconee Medical Center	15
Oconee Hospice of the Foothills	Hospice	Oconee Medical Center	3
Oconee Medical Center	Hospital	Oconee Medical Center	160
Lila Doyle Nursing Care Facility	Nursing Care	Oconee Medical Center	120
Seneca Health & Rehabilitation Center	Nursing Care	SSC Seneca Operating Co., LLC	132

Oconee Dialysis Clinic	Renal Dialysis	Bio-Medical Applications of South Carolina, Inc.	14
Country Christian Care, Inc.	Alzheimers Care	Country Christian Care, Inc.	14
Foothills Assisted Living	Alzheimers Care	Cite Health Mgmt. Services, Inc.	76
Benton Village of Seneca	Alzheimers Care	Seneca Senior Living LLC	62
For A Season Assisted Living	Residential Care	James Arnold Stevens, Inc.	5
The Inn at Seneca	Alzheimers Care	ALC TISSC, LLC	50
Lakeview Assisted Living	Alzheimers Care	Lakeview Assisted Living, Inc.	19
Morningside of Seneca	Residential Care	Morningside of Seneca, L.P.	59
Seneca Residential Care Center	Alzheimers Care	Wilburn Hammers	33

Source: SC DHEC Division of Health Licensing

Infrastructure

Water Treatment

There are five major public water providers located in Oconee County. Four of these major systems are owned by county municipalities, and the other is a special purpose district. Currently, all of the major water providers are in the process of expanding and upgrading their systems to meet the growth anticipated coming.

The major providers include:

- a. Salem Water Department
Owner: Town of Salem
Primary Source: Wells
Service Area: City limits, with expansion along Highway 130

- b. Seneca Light and Water
Owner: City of Seneca
Primary Source: Lake Keowee

Service Area: City limits and adjacent areas extending approximately 10 miles north and south

- c. Walhalla Water Department
Owner: City of Walhalla
Primary Source: Coneross Creek
Service Area: City limits, Town of West Union, and adjacent areas

- d. Westminster Commission of Public Works
Owner: Town of Westminster and private investors
Primary Source: Chauga River
Service Area: City limits and adjacent areas

- e. Pioneer Water System
Owner: Customers within system
Primary Source: Purchased water from Seneca and Westminster water systems
Service Area: Southern Oconee County extending into western Anderson County

In addition to the major providers listed above, a number of private suppliers offer service to residents living in developments across Oconee County. (Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997)

Sewage Treatment

Public sewage treatment is provided by the Oconee County Joint Regional Sewer Authority, which operates a treatment facility that primarily serves the municipal wastewater collection systems of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster. These individual systems combine to create a service area focused on the “triangle” region between the cities. In addition, lines have been constructed to serve the US 76/123 corridor east of Seneca, establishing southeastern Oconee County as one of the most attractive areas for development in the region. At the time of writing, plans are being finalized for the establishment of sewer service in and around Oconee County’s I-85 corridor, an effort anticipated to boost dramatically the area’s economic development.

The existing sewer treatment facility is located at 623 Return Church Road, south of Seneca on the banks of Coneross Creek. The facility treats in excess of 1 billion gallons of wastewater per year, as well as processing more than 3,000 tons of sludge annually. In the late 1990’s, the facility’s capacity was expanded from its original 4 million gallons per day to 7.8 million gallons per day. While the plant is currently operating far below its maximum volume, restrictions placed on the system by outside factors, not the least of which being the flow rate in Coneross Creek, preclude utilization of much of the excess capacity.

As well as the public sewer system, several private providers offer service to some of the larger residential developments in the county. Among these are Chickasaw Point and Foxwood Hills on Lake Hartwell, and Keowee Key on Lake Keowee. (Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997) In 2000, the village of Newry, previously served by a failed private system, was connected to the public sewer system in a joint effort by Oconee County and the City of Seneca.

Solid Waste

The Oconee County Solid Waste Department is located on Wells' Highway, near Seneca, SC. As Oconee County does not operate a countywide solid waste collection program, it provides residents with eleven manned convenience centers located across the county. Currently, all of the county's solid waste is hauled to landfill facilities in Homer, Georgia. The county maintains a Construction and Demolition (C&D) Landfill near Seneca.

Education

Elementary and Secondary Education

Oconee County is home to a number of educational facilities. The majority of the elementary and secondary facilities are public schools, which are owned and operated by the School District of Oconee County. Table CF-6 lists the public schools in Oconee County.

Table CF-6

Oconee County Public Schools	
School	Location
James M. Brown Elementary	Walhalla
Blue Ridge Elementary	Seneca
Fair Oak Elementary	Westminster
Keowee Elementary	Seneca
Northside Elementary	Seneca
Orchard Park Elementary	Westminster
Ravenel Elementary	Seneca
Tamassee Elementary	Tamassee
Walhalla Elementary	Walhalla
Westminster Elementary	Westminster
West-Oak Middle School	Westminster
Seneca Middle School	Seneca
Walhalla Middle School	Walhalla
Seneca High School	Seneca
Tamassee-Salem High School	Salem
Walhalla High School	Walhalla
West-Oak High School	Westminster

Source: Oconee County School District

In addition to the traditional schools listed in Table CF-6, the Oconee County School District operates an adult education program, an alternative school program, and the Hamilton Career Center, all located in Seneca.

The School District of Oconee County currently operates seventeen elementary, middle, and high schools under the direction of the Superintendent of Education. The Superintendent, the school district's chief administrative officer, is hired by the Oconee County School Board; a body comprised of five members representing Oconee's voting

districts. The district’s total student enrollment in 2008 was 10,716. (SC Annual School District Report Card Summary, SC Department of Education)

Table CF-7 provides an overview of Oconee County student’s results of the 2001 Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Table CF-7

SAT Results for School District of Oconee County					
School Year	Total Number of Seniors	Number Taking SAT	Percent Tested	Composite Scores	Comparison to 2000 score of 1029
2001	516	280	45	1002	-27
2007	604	254	42	1040	+11

Source: South Carolina Department of Education and <http://www.ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores>

The Education Foundation is a non-profit organization that operates as a collaborative effort between local civic groups, community boards, and city and county departments to enhance the teaching of science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, and service learning (STEAMS). The Foundation awarded over \$95,000 during two recent years for this purpose. (Superintendent’s Report, SC Annual School District Report Card Summary, SC Department of Education)

In addition to public schools, several private schools are located in Oconee County. Among these are the Oconee Christian Academy, the Faith Center Academy, and the Tamassee DAR School. Other private institutions, typically church supported, may also be found in and near the county. Also, the Clemson Montessori School, in nearby Clemson, is an option for some Oconeeans. The Wilderness Camp School in Westminster, as well as the Wilderness Way Girls Camp School in Fair Play, offers alternative educational options for at risk teens.

Higher Education

Although there are no colleges or universities located within the county, a number of institutions of higher learning are within easy commuting distance for Oconee residents. Included among these is Clemson University, one of the leading land grant universities in the nation. Also nearby are Anderson University and Southern Wesleyan University, both private Christian-oriented schools; and Tri-County Technical College, part of South Carolina’s world-class technical education system that offers students industrial, business, technological and university transfer programs. In addition, a number of private institutions offer various business and trade programs for Oconee residents.

Analysis

Overall, Oconee County is served by modern, relatively efficient community facilities. In fact, compared to those living in other areas of similar size and population, Oconee's residents are fortunate in many ways. The challenge facing the county, however, is not to simply maintain what exists now, but to provide for the expansions and upgrades that will be necessary in the coming years. Most sources indicate that the population of Oconee County will continue to grow rapidly in the near future; and given the proximity of both metropolitan Atlanta and Greenville, there is little doubt that it will. For citizens to maintain control of how their community develops, therefore, it will require planning years in advance- if the county is not adequately prepared to manage future challenges, it will be run over by them. The area's community facilities, which play a major role in establishing and maintaining the county's lifestyle, are therefore of vital interest.

Maintaining a system of good roads will be a major issue for Oconee County. As the area's population grows, existing roads will naturally become more crowded, entailing either the improvement of current routes, as well as the construction of new ones. However, as much of Oconee County's appeal is directly tied to its natural assets, planning and developing new thoroughfares in a manner that least influences these resources is vital. Issues such as the negative effects of impervious surfaces on groundwater, and the impact of additional roads in sensitive areas must be closely looked at to avoid negating the benefits of adding new roads. In addition, a viable system of regular road maintenance must be adopted and adhered to if waste is to be avoided.

Oconee County's water supply is an item of vital interest to all area residents. Currently, a handful of public water suppliers provide the more developed areas of the county with water, with a number of smaller private suppliers offering service to individual communities. There is, however, no unified plan for developing water service across the county, leaving many areas without access to a public water system. In years of normal rainfall, most residents in such areas are able to fill their needs from private wells. But during periods of drought, such as Oconee County experienced during the past decade, groundwater levels can become dangerously low. Further compounding the problem is the number of wells that now experience the inflow of pollutants during dry weather, forcing even some of those with sufficient volume to seek an alternative supply of safe drinking water. In addition, the lack of planning for future water needs impacts Oconee County's economic potential, for, as never before, water supplies are a prerequisite for attracting good jobs. With water a vital component of the operation of many high-tech industries, the lack of a comprehensive water plan leaves Oconee limited. Therefore, to meet both the physical and economic needs of the county, it is vital to establish a planning process that provides for the expansion of water supplies into any area requiring it.

Oconee County's solid waste situation remains tenuous at best, with the question of how to handle the area's future solid waste an issue of much debate. A long-range plan that delineates the way in which the county will handle its solid waste over the next several decades is greatly needed. Whether by a joint effort with other jurisdictions to create a regional landfill, or by the establishment of a new facility within the county, or by simply reaching a long-term agreement with a facility in another area, a decision on the handling of solid waste is critical if the county is to be able to move on to other issues. In addition, efforts to decrease the volume of waste produced, such as promoting an increase in recycling,

should be considered. One possible solution may be the establishment of a “pay as you throw” program, which has been used effectively by other jurisdictions to more fairly charge system users for the amount of solid waste they generate. Finally, as expansion and upgrading the system of recycling centers will likely be an ongoing effort for the near future, new facilities should be planned strictly based on population growth and development.

Oconee County is fortunate to have access to a number of quality educational institutions. The School District of Oconee County has created a system of public education that consistently ranks among the best in the state. And, although there are no colleges located within the county, Oconee is surrounded by a number of schools of higher education, providing area residents with easy access to a wide variety of educational choices. To insure that Oconee County’s residents have the best opportunities possible, therefore, the county should look to establishing closer bonds with these institutions, utilizing all available talent, and carefully considering the impact of future county actions on the overall quality of education. Closely connected to this is the direction taken by the county library system. Improvements and upgrades planned for the system will provide Oconee County with excellent facilities that can easily meet the needs of county residents. As with so many other items considered in this element, however, one of the main limiting factors is money, for major renovations and new facilities continue to increase in cost. But as is the case with so many other public facilities, revenues spent on a project are often recouped many times over in ways that cannot be easily shown on a spreadsheet. Therefore, Oconee County must move ahead with needed upgrades to the library in the most expeditious manner possible, while naturally seeking to be cost efficient, but not ignoring those benefits that lie beyond the scope of the bank account.

Oconee County is undergoing changes never before experienced. As the population grows, areas of the county that were formerly fields and pastures are fast becoming residential developments, shifting the population distribution from the traditionally “built up” areas into other places, and necessitating the creation of facilities to service the new residents. In the past, simply providing well-maintained roads may have been all that a local government needed to offer a population, but in today’s increasingly urban world, a wide range of services and facilities are often demanded of local governments. Many feel that those services that were once mere conveniences have become necessities. Therefore, to insure that it lives up to these new responsibilities, Oconee County must carefully plan all of its actions, avoiding waste and inefficiency where possible. If this is accomplished, the disruption resulting from future changes can be minimized, allowing for continued service to current residents, while preparing to meet the needs of those still to come.

Community Facility Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Community Facilities Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future economic development in Oconee County.
2. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.
3. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
4. Develop and implement an effective Capital Projects Program that provides the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County's citizens.
5. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.
6. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
7. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Seek local, state, and federal funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.
11. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.
12. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required.
13. Work to address the age-related problems that may arise among Oconee County's aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal efforts.

14. Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.

15. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.

16. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed changes resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the rapid population growth of Oconee County.

17. Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.



Housing Element

Overview

This element examines current and projected housing conditions, needs, and availability in Oconee County. The chapter begins with an analysis in terms of the age, condition, occupancy, location, type, and affordability of the current inventory of housing available to county citizens. Next, projections of future housing needs in terms of anticipated population levels and economic conditions are explored. The element concludes with goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update focused on changes reflected in the 2000 Census.

Housing Inventory

Oconee County's housing stock is comprised of a broad mix of housing types, ranging from both stick-built and manufactured single-family units to various types of multi-family housing units. Included among these multi-family types are conventional, public, government subsidized, and assisted-living units. While both stick-built and manufactured single-family units can be found throughout the county, most multi-family housing units, with a few exceptions, can be found in and around the towns of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster, where there is existing infrastructure, particularly public water and sewer. The lakes located in the county are driving forces behind the location of new houses, with this trend expected to continue over the next decade. See Table H-1 (below) for a comparison of households located in some of the counties in Upstate South Carolina.

Table H-1

Number of Households in Region by County, 1950-2000						
County	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Oconee	9,314	10,445	12,764	17,373	22,358	27,283
Anderson	23,573	27,855	33,277	46,944	55,481	65,649
Greenville	45,066	58,916	74,191	101,579	122,878	149,556
Pickens	10,092	12,854	17,274	25,986	33,422	41,306
Spartanburg	38,130	43,314	53,172	69,934	84,503	97,735

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Office of Research & Statistics

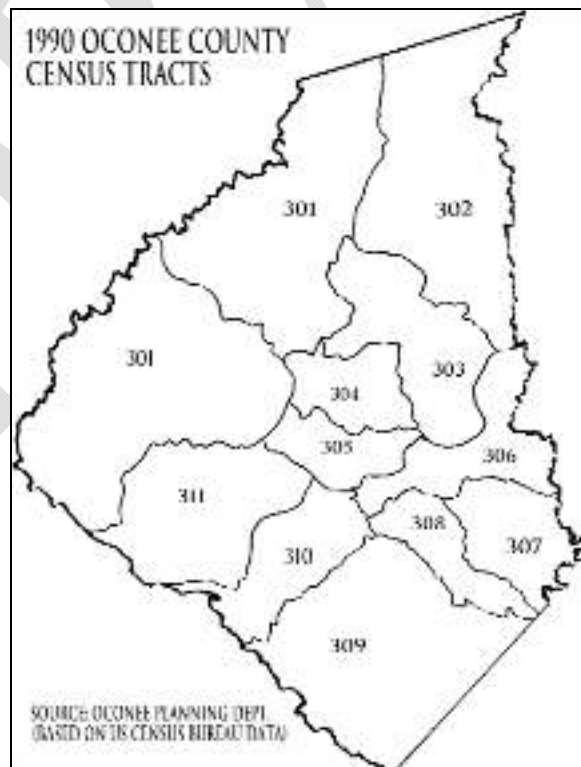
Table H-1 shows that, while Oconee lagged behind all other counties in the growth of the number of households between 1950 and 1980, it surpassed the rest of the counties between 1980 and 2000. This increase can in part be attributed to increased economic activity in Oconee spurred on by the development of the county sewer system, the creation of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee, and organized economic development activities. It was also during this period that a significant increase in the number of retirees moving from other regions began to settle around the county's lakes.

At the time of writing, Oconee County has experienced a significant decline in building activity due to a nationwide economic downturn. Even though our region has suffered, it has withstood the crisis better than other parts of the country. The scope of the impact of the decline will only be revealed over time, but there is little doubt that there will be long-term implications resulting from this period. As a result, there may be impacts on our housing stock, particularly as some sources indicate that people, heretofore seeking to maximize their homes in terms of size and quality, may begin to 'downsize' in an effort to be prepared for future crises. This remains to be seen; either way, our natural resources and relaxed lifestyle are almost sure to continue to attract a large number of newcomers for decades to come, which means that home construction will again become a major component of the Oconee County economy.

Households by Census Tract

The U.S. Census Bureau divides Oconee County into eleven separate census tracts. See Figure H-1 below.

Figure H-1



The table below shows the number of households in each census tract in Oconee.

Table H-2

Number of Households by Census Tract						
Census Tract	1980	1990	1999	2004 (projected)	2000 Census	% Change from 1990 to 2000
301	1,053	1421	1601	1694	1704	20
302	839	1734	2154	2343	2487	43
303	1,308	1576	1709	1783	2056	30
304	2,320	2896	3218	3380	3159	9
305	1,044	1265	1372	1430	1606	27
306	2059	2597	2861	2993	2978	15
307	2635	3328	3681	3862		8
307.01					1623	
307.02					1968	
308	1747	2040	2205	2301	2544	25
309	1604	2238	2542	2692	3450	54
310	1681	2002	3371	3974	2209	10
311	1083	1261	1349	1399	1499	19

Source: 2000 Oconee County Economic Profile (ACOG) and the 2000 Census

The data indicates that all areas of the county experienced significant growth between 1980 and 1999. Census Tract 302, which encompasses much of the fast developing Lake Keowee area, has experienced the greatest increase in the number of households since 1980, having increased 157%. Census Tract 310, which is located near Westminster, also experienced tremendous growth during the 1990's, posting an increase of 68%. Overall, the 1990 Census revealed that there were 17,361 households in the county, with a homeownership rate of 76.9%.

The 2000 Census data provides us with a glimpse of what may be the beginning of a transition of growth. The largest percentage of growth during the last decade occurred in Census tract 309, which encompasses I-85 interstate and the village of Fair Play. The second largest increase in households was found in tract 302, which includes a large part of the Lake Keowee area.

Housing Units

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a housing unit as a habitable dwelling that includes individual single-family dwellings, duplexes, apartments, condominiums, and other habitable dwelling components, whether currently occupied or vacant.

The following table illustrates the number of housing units in Oconee and other upstate counties.

Table H-3

Housing Units in Upstate South Carolina, 1950-2000							
County	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007 estimates
Oconee	9,999	11,757	14,032	20,226	25,983	32,383	37,029
Abbeville	6,329	6,262	7,099	8,547	9,846	11,658	unavailable
Anderson	24,890	30,083	35,981	51,359	60,753	73,213	82,303
Cherokee	9,051	10,060	11,605	14,955	17,610	22,400	unavailable
Greenville	47,857	64,140	79,939	108,172	131,645	162,803	186,106
Greenwood	11,560	13,980	16,524	21,017	24,735	28,243	unavailable
Laurens	12,423	14,082	15,810	19,628	23,201	30,239	unavailable
Pickens	10,898	13,799	18,673	28,469	35,865	46,000	51,075
Spartanburg	39,699	45,971	56,801	75,833	89,927	106,986	120,682
Union	7,990	8,396	9,499	11,393	12,230	13,351	unavailable

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The number of housing units in Oconee County has undergone rapid growth since 1950, having increased approximately 224% during the period. This places Oconee in the top 3 counties in the upstate, along with its neighboring mountain counties of Pickens and Greenville (they increased 322% and 240% respectively). It should be noted that during the last several decades, the number of units in Oconee increased at least 25% per decade, with the greatest growth occurring during the 1970's. Currently, census estimates show the number of housing units has increased roughly 13 percent since 2000.

Table H-4 (below) breaks down the housing units by both municipality and unincorporated areas.

Table H-4

1980-2000 Housing Unit Totals for Oconee County and Municipalities					
Jurisdiction	1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Salem	90	92	2.2	72	-21.7
Seneca	3005	3367	12.0	3677	9.2
Walhalla	1649	1726	4.7	1705	-1.2
Westminster	1303	1367	4.9	1333	-2.5
West Union	128	131	2.3	145	10.7
Unincorporated Areas	14,051	19300	37.0	25451	32
Total	20,226	25,983	28.5	32383	24.6

Source: 2000 Oconee County Profile (ACOG); 2006-2007 Oconee County Profile (ACOG)

The table shows that Seneca experienced the greatest growth of all the municipalities with a 12.0% increase between 1980 and 1990 and a 9% increase from 1990 through 2000. West Union and Salem experienced the least growth from 1980 to 1990 with almost identical levels, 2.3% and 2.2% respectively; however, the 1990's showed Salem experienced a sharp decrease in overall numbers during the period. The unincorporated areas of the county outpaced the municipalities growth by approximately 5%.

Occupancy Status

The South Carolina Statistical Abstract '99 shows that in 1990 there were 25,983 housing units in Oconee County, with 22,358 of the units occupied, and 3,625 vacant at the time the data was collected. Of these, 17,196 units were owner occupied, and 5,162 were rented. Table H-5 (below) illustrates some of the characteristics of unit occupancy, and the extent of change between 1980 and 2000.

Table H-5

Housing Occupancy Characteristics, 1980-1990					
	1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Total Persons	48,611	57,494	18.27	66,215	15.2
Total Housing Units	20,226	25,983	28.46	32,383	24.6
Total Vacant Units	1,665	3,625	54	5,100	40.7
Households	17,373	22,358	28.69	27,283	22.0
Persons per Household	2.8	2.6	-7.7	2.4	-7.7
Families	13,723	16,875	22.97	19,589	16.1
Persons per Family	3.2	3.0	-6.7	2.9	-3.3

NA= Data Not Available

Source: Oconee County Profile (ACOG); 2000 Census Data

As the table illustrates, the total number of households has undergone a tremendous increase since 1980; at the same time, the number of persons per household has declined.

The 1990 Census showed that there was a 76.9% homeownership rate in Oconee County, while the rest of the state had a 69.8% rate. This 7.1% difference may be at least partially attributed to the traditionally rural, self-sufficient lifestyle of Oconee residents. Added to this, of course, is the fact that in recent decades the county has undergone a tremendous growth in population led by retirees from other regions. Having finished their working years, with pensions, investments, and other sources of wealth, a large portion of the group comes to Oconee County looking to purchase land and build a home, thereby further expanding the area's rate of homeownership.

Rural versus Urban

Although there is a fast growing urban cluster inside Oconee County, the vast majority of county residents still live in rural areas. In 1970, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 70.1% of Oconee residents lived in rural areas; by 1990, this number had increased to 74.6%. By 2000, however, this trend has reversed, with the percentage of rural residents falling to 70.9%.

Table H-6 (below) illustrates the division between rural and urban in 2000.

Table H-6 – Urban and Rural Population: Census 2000

	Oconee County, South Carolina
Total:	66,215
Urban:	19,215
Inside urbanized areas	0
Inside urban clusters	19,215
Rural	47,000

Source: United States Census Bureau

Type and Value of Housing Stock

Oconee County's housing stock is comprised of a mix of housing types, age, and affordability levels. In 1990 there were a median number of 5.3 rooms per housing unit. A mean of 2.6 persons lived in owner-occupied housing units, while a mean of 2.3 persons lived in renter-occupied housing. The median year of construction of the structure was 1972. (State Data Center, Div. of Research & Statistical Services)

Many individuals in Oconee County rely on manufactured housing, particularly for low-cost dwellings. In 2000, the Oconee County Council adopted an ordinance that banned the importation of any manufactured home into the county if it was constructed before June 1976. While the ban did not immediately impact any structure that was already located in the county at the time of adoption (such units were exempted), the regulation will remove, over time, those potentially hazardous manufactured homes constructed before federally mandated minimum standards were adopted. In 1990 there were 6,444 manufactured homes registered in Oconee County, of which 5,218 were occupied. (State Data Center, Div. of Research & Statistical Services)

An examination of the value of Oconee's single-family housing stock reveals structures ranging from extremely low-value (sometimes substandard) structures to custom luxury homes situated in exclusive lakefront communities. While the exact number of homes not meeting minimum occupancy standards established by adopted building codes is unknown, 1990 census figures indicate that the amount is relatively small. Only 1.1 % (249 of the 25,983 households in the county) are known to have incomplete plumbing systems, and all but 35 units were shown in census data to have a steady fuel source for heat (Note: While plumbing and heating are only two of a variety of factors used in determining if a structure is safe to occupy, no other reliable data was available at the time of writing). While the existence of any substandard housing units may be deemed to be unacceptable by many in the 21st Century, the presence of such dwellings is perhaps to be expected in any traditionally rural agrarian area. This is particularly true in Oconee since the county only began enforcing building codes in 1999.

As noted above, multi-family housing units are predominantly located in or near the municipalities, with few units having been recently constructed in unincorporated areas. Due to the limitations imposed on obtaining sewer service for projects outside town boundaries, however, few units are being constructed in unincorporated areas. As a

result, the multi-family housing stock is aging. In addition, rents on a significant number of units in the county are subsidized by governmental funds, expanding low-cost housing options for many people. U.S. Census data indicates that in 1994 there was a 98.9% occupancy rate (636 units) for subsidized rent units. There was a 9% vacancy rate for the 554 conventional units available in the county.

The estimated median value of owner-occupied housing in 1999 ranged from \$58,424 in Census Tract 307 (east of Seneca) to \$227,551 in Census Tract 302 (near Lake Keowee). This table shows the value of housing distributed by census tract.

Table H-7

Estimated Value of Owner-Occupied Housing by Census Tract, 1999								
Tracts	Median Value	Number of Units Per Value Range						
		<\$75K	\$75K-\$100K	\$100K-\$150K	\$150K-\$200K	\$200K-\$300K	\$300K-\$400K	>\$400K
301	60,403	396	103	79	24	8	1	0
302	227,551	252	112	94	66	252	165	217
303	84,186	323	132	125	57	71	26	9
304	65,326	995	303	211	59	21	3	2
305	74,897	325	207	91	19	5	1	0
306	107,551	525	300	417	164	258	88	46
307	58,424	1219	292	220	48	17	1	4
308	70,524	568	212	162	47	29	4	0
309	67,697	545	179	130	52	26	6	4
310	71,267	797	329	260	46	40	5	4
311	63,846	325	96	96	16	1	0	0

Source: 2000 Oconee County Profile (ACOG)

Tracts 302 and 306, which lie adjacent to Lake Keowee, are the location of the greatest number of homes valued over \$400,000, with 92% of all such units in the county lying within the two tracts.

The figures in Table H-8 were updated according to the data released by the 2000 Census. Census track 302, on the shores of Lake Keowee, continues to have the highest median value home; although the updated table shows a slight decrease in value it is insignificant. The two next highest tracks are 303 and 306 which are also located on the shores of Lake Keowee. Census Track 306 saw an increase of roughly 300 percent in the number of homes valued over \$400,000.

Table H-8

Estimated Value of Owner-Occupied Housing by Census Tract, 2000 Census										
Census Tract	Total:	Median Home Value	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to 99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$249,999	\$250,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 to \$399,999	Greater than \$400,000
301	735	82,700	139	351	115	83	21	14	7	5
302	1,493	210,100	126	237	178	159	231	122	209	231
303	999	134,500	93	280	227	168	44	54	69	64
304	1,683	86,300	297	745	387	189	39	2	15	9
305	785	86,200	94	452	162	33	5	0	21	18
306	1,990	131,500	190	497	466	204	193	132	128	180
307.01	724	60,300	244	388	85	7	0	0	0	0
307.02	1,015	96,300	95	435	185	194	71	14	7	14
308	1,278	99,600	57	588	380	112	41	74	8	18
309	1,382	99,200	73	626	343	183	60	35	50	12
310	989	78,600	248	406	224	87	0	8	16	0
311	523	75,300	105	307	80	25	6	0	0	0
U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census										

Seasonal/Temporary Housing

Many homes surrounding Oconee’s lakes are second homes, used primarily on weekends and for vacations (and occasionally as rentals). The number of seasonal housing units, as defined by the Census Bureau, is significant.

Table H-9

Seasonal Housing Units in Selected Upstate Counties, 1950-2000				
County	Seasonal Units 1950	Seasonal Units 1970	Seasonal Units 1990	Seasonal Units 2000
Oconee	90	110	1,703	2634
Pickens	181	92	333	800
Anderson	102	165	1,347	1811
Greenville	404	56	722	1550

Source: State Data Center, Office of Research & Statistics 2000 Census

The number of seasonal housing units in Oconee County has grown tremendously since 1950. The table above shows that growth in seasonal units was slow between 1950 and 1970, but was subject to a tremendous increase between 1970 and 2000. The 2000 Census reveals that the number of seasonal units in Oconee rose another 36% to 2,634 units. This growth in seasonal housing during the 1990’s reflects the impact of the

development of Lakes Keowee and Jocassee, which resulted in a great increase in second homes.

Oconee County is the location of the Duke Energy’s Oconee Nuclear Station, one of the premier nuclear facilities in the nation. While there is no doubt that the county has reaped many benefits from having the facility within its borders, the plant’s activities often influence the lives of Oconee’s citizens in unforeseen ways. This is particularly true regarding the effect that both regular and unscheduled maintenance and repair work has on the local demand for temporary housing (both single-family units and multi-family units). The nuclear station’s utilization of large numbers of subcontractors and temporary workers occasionally results in full capacity situations in available temporary housing in the surrounding region. To take advantage of the short housing supply, some property owners offer rental units traditionally leased by the year for shorter terms, typically for higher rents than would be received for a standard lease. To this point, Oconee County’s available housing stock, along with that in adjoining counties, has proven to be sufficient to provide for temporary workers for limited periods. Any comprehensive examination and plan for future housing in the county, however, should not ignore these occasional drastic changes in demand.

Affordable Housing

In 2007, the State of South Carolina passed the Priority Investment Act, which expanded the requirements of the Housing Element to include a detailed discussion of affordable housing. In Oconee County, housing prices have risen faster than family income, thereby creating a significant deficit for many individuals or families trying to pay for a home. According to one source, the value of a median priced house in Oconee County rose by 71.4 percent between 1990 and 2000; at the same time, the median income of the county increased by only 39.5 percent.¹ This trend continued through 2007. But what is affordable housing, and why is it important?

Affordable housing is plagued with misconceptions in public perception that may be the biggest barrier to overcome. The Campaign for Affordable Housing² has identified five of the most common myths surrounding affordable housing.

Table H-10

Five Common Myths Regarding Affordable Housing ³	
MYTH	TRUTH
Affordable housing is ugly.	Affordable housing is designed to fit into the community character in size and style. It is typically privately owned, designed, and developed. Like everything else the cost of a home has little to do with whether or not it is ugly.
Affordable housing increases traffic.	All types of development impact traffic volume. Affordable housing is best suited near employment centers, which would decrease dependency on the automobile. The National Personal Transportation Survey found

¹ Eldridge, Diane. “Affordable Housing in the Upstate.” The Upstate Advocate. December 2003.

² www.tcuh.org

³ ibid

		that low-income households make 40% fewer trips than other households. Studies indicate that the average resident in a compact neighborhood will drive 20-30% less than residents of a neighborhood half as dense.”
Affordable housing increases crime.		There is no correlation between safe, decent, and affordable housing and crime. In fact studies show that what does cause crime and a host of other socio-economic ills is community disinvestment, overcrowding, lack of jobs and community services.
Affordable housing over-burdens schools and infrastructure.		Studies show that the traditional single family home neighborhood has 2 to 3 times the number of school aged children than those living in apartments. U.S. Office of Technology Assessment found that it costs 10,000 dollars per unit more to provide infrastructure to a lower density/urban development than a more compact urban development (OTA-E11-643, 1995. Infrastructure costs significantly decline as density increases.
Affordable housing lowers property values.		Academic studies and market analyses prove otherwise. A Study by Wayne State Univ. found that affordable housing often has an insignificant or positive effect on property values in higher value neighborhood and improves values in lower-valued neighborhoods.

Most people agree that safe, decent, and affordable housing is an important component of a good society; but beyond just providing people a place to stay that they can afford, some contend that it positively influences the economy, and even improves the quality of our environment. As stated by one planning expert, “The housing problem that affects the most Americans today is cost burden, which happens when families spend so much for housing that their ability to pay for the other necessities of life is compromised.”⁴ Of course, the dollar amount considered affordable varies widely from region to region, depending upon the amount of wealth that flows throughout the local economy. To deal with this variability, the federal government has adopted the standard that households spending 30% or more of their gross household income for housing are burdened, and those spending 50% or more for housing are severely burdened.⁵ As more and more individuals find themselves in this situation, the broader economy suffers from the lack of discretionary income. In addition, with less money available, normal and routine maintenance of housing also decreases, which in turn expands the amount of substandard housing in a community. There is also the fact that, as housing becomes less affordable in an area, development moves away from higher cost areas to lower ones, increasing the need for infrastructure in rural lands, which itself fuels more sprawl. Finally, affordability also influences industry recruitment, for companies want their employees to live close by their workplace. When the average worker cannot afford to live in a given area, employers will naturally look elsewhere.

⁴ Mallach, Alan, FAICP. “The Case for Affordable Housing.” Planning. March 2009. pg. 33

⁵ Ibid.

Affordable housing also engenders a sense of community, for by placing housing within the price range of those that form ‘the backbone’ of our society and economy, neighborhoods are stabilized by the presence of those groups that tend to support and sustain those activities that establish an identity. Further, “stable housing boosts the educational performance of children, induces higher participation in civic and volunteer activity, improves health care outcomes, and lowers crime rates, and lessens welfare dependency.”⁶ Therefore, for a number of reasons, affordable and safe housing matters not only to those seeking a home, but to everyone else in a community. Without a doubt, affordable housing is a critical issue for the future prosperity of Oconee County.

One of the keys to beginning a discussion on any issue is to define the terms involved to ensure that there is a minimum of confusion. The South Carolina Priority Investment Act defines Affordable Housing, in the case of dwelling units for sale, as

“housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance, and condominium or association fees, if any, constitute no more than twenty eight percent of the annual household income for a household earning no more than eighty percent of the areas median income, by household size for the metropolitan statistical area as published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) and, in cases of dwelling units for rent, housing for which the rent and utilities constitute no more than thirty percent of the annual household income for a household earning no more than eight percent of the area median income, by household size for the metropolitan statistical area as published from time to time by HUD.”

Distilled to a formula, the definition is:

$$\text{Affordability} = 28\% \times (80\% \times \text{Areas Annual Household Income (per HUD)})$$

Table H-11 (below) contains the 2009 income limits for 80% of median income for most upstate counties.

Table H-11

2009 Maximum Income Limits for 80 % of Median Income									
COUNTY	MEDIAN INCOME	Number of Persons in Family							
		1 PERSON	2 PERSON	3 PERSON	4 PERSON	5 PERSON	6 PERSON	7 PERSON	8 PERSON
ANDERSON	53,800	\$30,750	\$35,150	\$39,550	\$43,900	\$47,450	\$50,950	\$54,450	\$57,950
CHEROKEE	47,700	\$30,750	\$35,150	\$39,550	\$43,900	\$47,450	\$50,950	\$54,450	\$57,950
GREENVILLE	57,200	\$32,050	\$36,600	\$41,200	\$45,750	\$49,400	\$53,050	\$56,750	\$60,400
GREENWOOD	53,400	\$29,900	\$34,150	\$38,450	\$42,700	\$46,100	\$49,550	\$52,950	\$56,350
OCONEE	55,100	\$30,850	\$35,300	\$39,700	\$44,100	\$47,650	\$51,150	\$54,700	\$58,200
PICKENS	57,200	\$32,050	\$36,600	\$41,200	\$45,750	\$49,400	\$53,050	\$56,750	\$60,400

⁶ *South Carolina Priority Investment Act: Implementation Guide for Local Governments*. American Planning Association South Carolina Chapter: Making Great Communities Happen. First Edition. October 15, 2008. pg. 29

Income limits are based on actual County Median Income Limits or State Non Metro Median Income limits, as computed, income limits are rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: www.sha.state.sc.us/Housing_Partners/Income_Limits

Based on Table H-11, for a family of four in Oconee County the income at the 80% limit is \$44,100, which multiplied by 28% equals \$12,342, an annual total. Therefore, expenditures for an affordable housing in Oconee County should be no more than approximately \$1,000 per month.

Rental units are also a critical component of affordable housing in a community. According to a U.S. Census Bureau Report,

Down payment assistance would do more to improve the affordability of a modestly priced home for renters than lower down payment requirements (which would increase monthly mortgage payments) or major reduction in interest rates. Financial assistance, would however, require funding from another source, ideally from a party that has no financial gain from the transaction, such as employers, nonprofit groups, or a governmental agency.⁷

Affordability standards for rental units were also established by the Priority Investment Act, and are determined by the following formula:

$$\text{Affordability (Rental)} = 30\% \times (80\% \times \text{Areas Annual Household Income (per HUD)})$$

Table H-12 (below) shows what HUD considers be within acceptable rental limits for most upstate counties. All figures include an estimated allowance for utilities.

Table H-12

2009 Maximum Gross Rent Limits for 80 % of Median Income						
		Maximum Monthly Gross Rent* (utilities included)				
COUNTY	MEDIAN INCOME	0 BR	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR
ANDERSON	52,400	768	823	988	1,141	1,273
CHEROKEE	46,700	768	823	988	1,141	1,273
GREENVILLE	57,200	791	847	1,017	1,175	1,311
GREENWOOD	53,400	747	800	961	1,110	1,238
OCONEE	55,100	771	826	992	1,146	1,278
PICKENS	57,200	801	858	1,030	1,189	1,326
* Gross Rent includes contract rent plus tenant paid utilities						
Rent limits are based on actual County Median Income Limits or State Non Metro Median Income limits, as computed, gross rent limits are rounded to the nearest whole number						

As shown in Table H-10, a two-bedroom rental unit for a family in Oconee County should cost no more than \$992 dollars a month for rent and utilities (water,

⁷Savage, Howard A. "Who Could Afford to Buy a Home in 2004?" United States Census Bureau. Issued May 2009.

sewer, electricity, natural gas, etc). It should be noted that the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey has estimated that the median gross rent in Oconee County is approximately 26.5% of the household income in the past 12 months. Therefore, the median rent in Oconee County actually falls within the State's definition of affordability, with the caveat that utilities are not included in the Census estimates. (Often renters pay more for utilities than owners do because rental units are typically more inefficient).

Barriers to Affordability

The lack of affordable housing can result from a variety of reasons. In 2004, the United States Census Bureau published a brief report entitled: "Who Could Afford to Buy a Home in 2004"⁸, which looked at some of the trends in housing affordability in 2004. According to this report, 58 % of all American families could afford to buy a modestly priced home in the state where they resided, provided the home was valued in the bottom 25 % of the regions home value distribution. Estimating the bottom 25% range of housing values (see table: "Estimated Value of Owner-Occupied Housing by Census Tract, 2000 Census") for Oconee County shows that 58% of residents could indeed afford a home that cost less than 100,000 dollars, provided there were no external limiting factors. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report, among such barriers that prevented people from purchasing a home were generally: excessive debt, lack of down payment, poor credit, and interest rates which took the home out of the affordability range. Naturally, government is very limited in what it can do to change the personal choice of an individual to acquire excessive debt or create a bad credit history. Therefore, other avenues must be pursued to assist with making housing affordable.

The South Carolina Priority Investment Act Implementation Guide for Local Governments identifies some of the non-essential regulations that may become possible barriers to affordable housing. Of those identified, very few apply to the current regulatory climate of Oconee. Table H-13 (below) identifies various regulations that may influence the affordability of housing in Oconee County, and evaluates the strengths and possible areas of concern.

⁸ Savage, Howard A. "Who Could Afford to Buy a Home in 2004?" United States Census Bureau. Issued May 2009.

Table H-13

Oconee County's Land and Housing Ordinances		
Code of Ordinances	Strengths	Areas to look at in light of affordable housing issue
Chapter 6: <i>Building Code Regulation</i>	<p>Protects homeowners from poor construction that can devastate a new home owner</p> <p>Ensures health and safety of residential and multi-family construction</p>	<p>“One Stop” permitting</p> <p>Analysis could be undertaken to identify barriers unrelated to health and safety that may prevent affordability but change would have to come from the State level, as building codes is a mandate for local governments</p> <p>Examine fee structure and permitting cost for projects meeting affordability requirements</p>
Chapter 16: <i>Flood Ordinance</i>	Prevents loss in cases of catastrophic flood events	
Chapter 26: <i>Roads and Bridges</i>	<p>Provides for gravel roads, that meet fire code for those developments of ten units or less</p> <p>Provides a mechanism to reimburse a developer who is required to upgrade a county road and also encourages developers to provide affordable housing (see section 26-5)</p>	<p>Road pavement widths for private road developments</p> <p>Sidewalks</p>
Chapter 32: <i>Unified Performance Standards</i>		
Article V: <i>Group Homes</i>		<p>Ordinance should be reviewed and adjusted</p> <p>1,000 feet separation from nearest residence</p>
Article VI: <i>Land Development and Subdivision Regulations</i>	<p>Administrative Review for all development</p> <p>Clearly defined review process</p> <p>Lot sizes vary with type of sewage treatment, with most restrictive for traditional septic (state minimum) of .57 acres.</p> <p>Exempts Family Transfers</p> <p>One cost for review at time of preliminary application</p>	<p>Setback standards for residences</p> <p>Security in Lieu of Completion of 125 % of total cost before final plat can be recorded</p> <p>Development where no land is subdivided but still requires a review due to definition of subdivision to include dwelling units</p>

Chapter 34: <i>Utilities</i>		Look at possible payback mechanisms for developers when they need to upgrade system Article V: Sewer Impact Fee
Chapter 38: <i>Zoning</i>	Tool that can be used to minimize the negative impacts of incompatible land uses in community Citizen Initiated Control Free District does not regulate use Manufactured Housing is not treated differently than stick built housing	Ordinance needs to provide for both Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND's) and Planned Unit Developments (PUD's) New to County and issues still need to be worked out.

A review of Table H-13 shows that, compared to neighboring counties, Oconee County's regulatory climate is open to affordable housing. Still, there is room for improvement, and all regulations governing development, existing and proposed, need to be examined with an eye toward increasing 'friendliness' toward affordable housing. Of more importance in the short term, however, is the need for Oconee County to partner with non-profits and other organizations that can help guide citizens in getting into a home of their own. To this end, a community housing task force should be considered the top priority. Once created, this entity could be charged with not only working to foster the development of affordable units, but also with monitoring situations that serve as potential impediments.

The Priority Investment Act also requires local governments to analyze market-based incentives that may be available for the development of affordable housing. The Priority Investment Act Implementation Guide for Local Governments identifies a number of market-based incentives that may be considered for suitability for incorporation into the development standards and practices of Oconee County.

Table H-14

Implementation Guide for Local Governments: Market Based Incentives for Developers	
Incentive	Summary
Density Bonuses	"Developers who commit to allotting a certain percentage of units at below market rates may be allowed to reduce lot sizes or increase the number of houses on a lot, thereby reducing land cost per unit." page 30
Relaxed Zoning Regulations	"Modification to regulations such as: minimum lot area requirements, limitations on multi-family dwellings, minimum setbacks, variances, reduced parking requirements, and modified street standards

	are essential to the streamlined development of affordable housing.” page 30
Reduced or Waived Fees	Counties could look at reducing or waiving fees for projects that incorporate a determined percentage of the development as affordable units. “This may include reimbursements or permit fees to developers whose developments are certified as affordable and also waiving up to 100% of the water or sewer tap fees for affordable units.” page 31
Fast Track Permitting	Basically, streamline the permitting process with pre-approved house plans, a comprehensive pre-application review for major projects, and create central permitting location
Design Flexibility	“Loosening design flexibility involves creating pre-approved design standards to allow for quick and easy approval. Infill development, mixed use projects, and accessory dwellings are promoted.” page 31
Transfer of Development Rights	“A TRD program permits landowners to shift densities from one site to another through a negotiated transaction. Under this approach, a landowner in a “sending” area could sell development rights to landowners in a “receiving area.” ⁹ “TDR programs operate through the transfer of development rights, or units, of density from one geographic area to another within the region.” page 32
Impact Fee Exemptions	“Whether impact fees would be considered “nonessential housing regulatory requirement,” is unclear, but this affordable housing exemption may remove a potential barrier to the development of affordable housing and would be appropriate for consideration in a designated priority investment zone.” page 34. If Oconee County ever chooses to look at impact fees, considerations will need to be given for affordable housing.
Growth Related Public Facilities Standards	This market based incentive, when affordable housing is an issue, would adjust the level of public service standards that some communities put into place so that infrastructure keeps up with demand and maintains an acceptable level of service.

⁹ Freilich, Robert H. and S. Mark White. *21st Century Land Development Code*. With Kate F. Murray. American Planning Association: Washington, D.C. 2008 p 110-111

Urban Growth Boundaries	<p>“The PIA (<i>Priority Investment Act</i>) provides for the establishment of a priority investment zone, within which traditional neighborhood design and affordable housing must be permitted. The urban growth boundary concept, while not authorized by the PIA expressly, is consistent with the priority investment zone concept. For example, the priority investment and a “developing area” <i>boundary</i> may be one in the same.” page 37; italics mine</p>
Development Agreements	<p>“The development agreement is a local government planning and implementation tool that may be used to meet the intent of the Priority Investment Act.” page 37</p> <p>State law is very specific as to the standards and requirements of utilizing a development agreement. The specific standard can be found in “The South Carolina Government Development Act.”</p>
Tax Increment Financing	<p>This is a complex statute in State Law that basically allows for the redevelopment of an area and the increase of that revenue to be returned back for specific purposes</p>
Overlay Zoning Districts	<p>According to the SC Planning Act overlay, zones may impose or relax a set of requirements imposed by the underlying zoning district when there is a special public interest in a particular geographic area that does not coincide with the underlying zone boundaries.</p> <p>In this case, overlay zones may be used to relax a set of requirements, which would provide incentive for affordable housing in that location.</p>
Local Government Improvement Districts	<p>Mechanism provide in State Code that allows local government to plan and implement public infrastructure improvements and to apply assessments on property within the district, with the concurrence of property owners, to pay a portion of the cost of the improvement. page 41</p>
Special Property Tax Assessments	<p>S.C. Code sec. 4-9-195,et seq. authorizes counties to temporarily abate property taxes for a period of up to twenty years on all or a portion of the value added to real property as a result of an approved rehabilitation. This may be used as an incentive for renovations of low to moderate-income rental property. page 44</p>

Permitted Construction

Table H-15

	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004
Total Permits	2511	2255	2078	1993	2007
1&2 Family	719	418	555	533	638
Mobile Home	808	625	444	379	375
Commercial	64	35	67	105	117
	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004
Fees Paid	\$362,991	\$310,000	\$480,992	\$487,585	\$561,419
Valuation	\$119,868,072	\$144,677,195	\$158,623,641	\$162,774,416	\$172,993,644
Budget	\$302,847	\$358,195	\$338,876	\$418,141	\$378,943

Table H-15 continued,

	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Total Permits	2197	2288	1667	2207	1315
1&2 Family	756	795	783	746	267
Mobile Home	306	397	217	252	255
Commercial	102	120	140	218	121
	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Fees Paid	\$745,963	\$976,280	\$876,607	\$808,910	\$505,628
Valuation	\$226,033,418	\$269,450,530	\$195,969,711	\$312,086,529	\$127,053,545
Budget	\$400,934	\$530,395	\$617,740	\$660,606	\$623,512

Source: State Data Center, Office of Research & Statistics

Construction activity increased in Oconee County during the 1990's, posting significant gains in each year from 1995 onward. It should be noted that the figures shown in Table H-8 reflect permits issued by the Oconee County Tax Assessor's Office. On July 1, 1999, the newly created Oconee County Building Codes Department began operations, assuming the responsibility of permitting all construction activity. Operation of the Building Codes Department required more money than the county had been receiving from permits sold by the Tax Assessor's Office. The county therefore turned to the fee schedule recommended by the Southern Building Codes Congress International (SBCCI) to cover the additional costs, which resulted in higher permit prices. The rates were based on a regional standard recognized throughout the south, bringing Oconee into line with other jurisdictions operating building code programs. Construction activity continued to increase through 2006; however, in 2007 we saw a decline. 2008 value increased with the addition of a new patient tower at Oconee Memorial Hospital. With the national financial recession of 2009, construction numbers had a dramatic decrease.

Oconee County Building Codes has traditionally provided a surplus revenue stream into the general county budget from permit fees, the exception being in 2001 and 2009 during times of lower construction activity.

Figure H-1

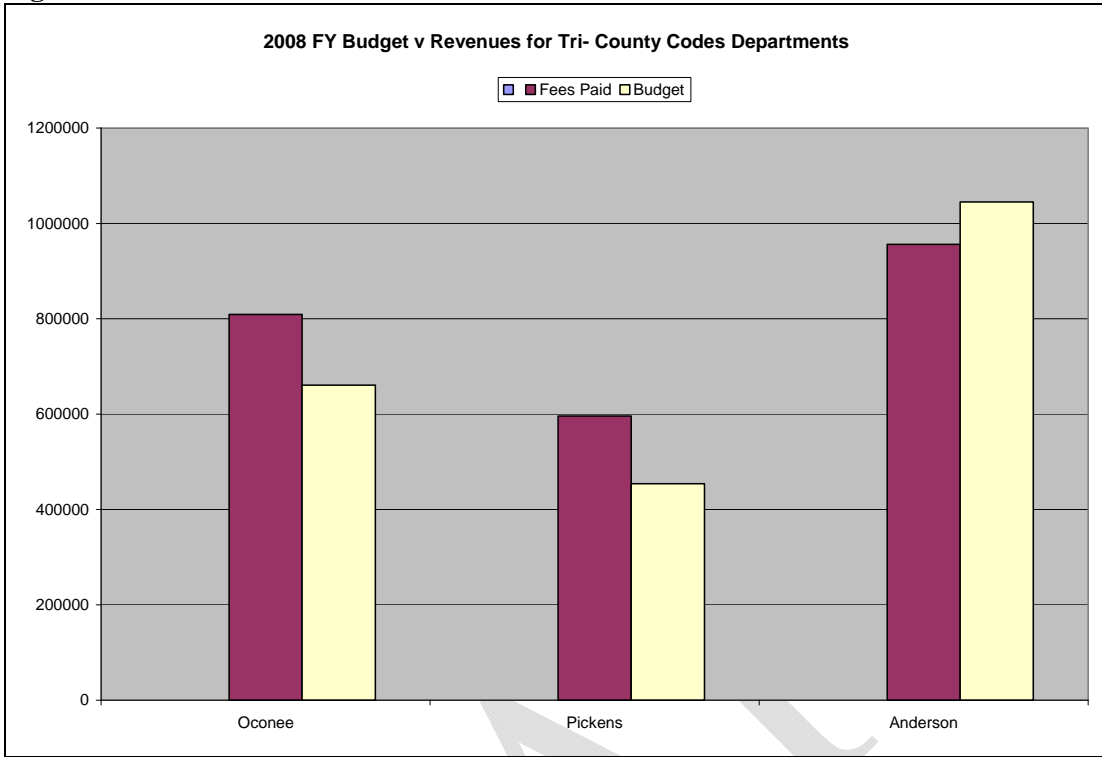


Figure H-2

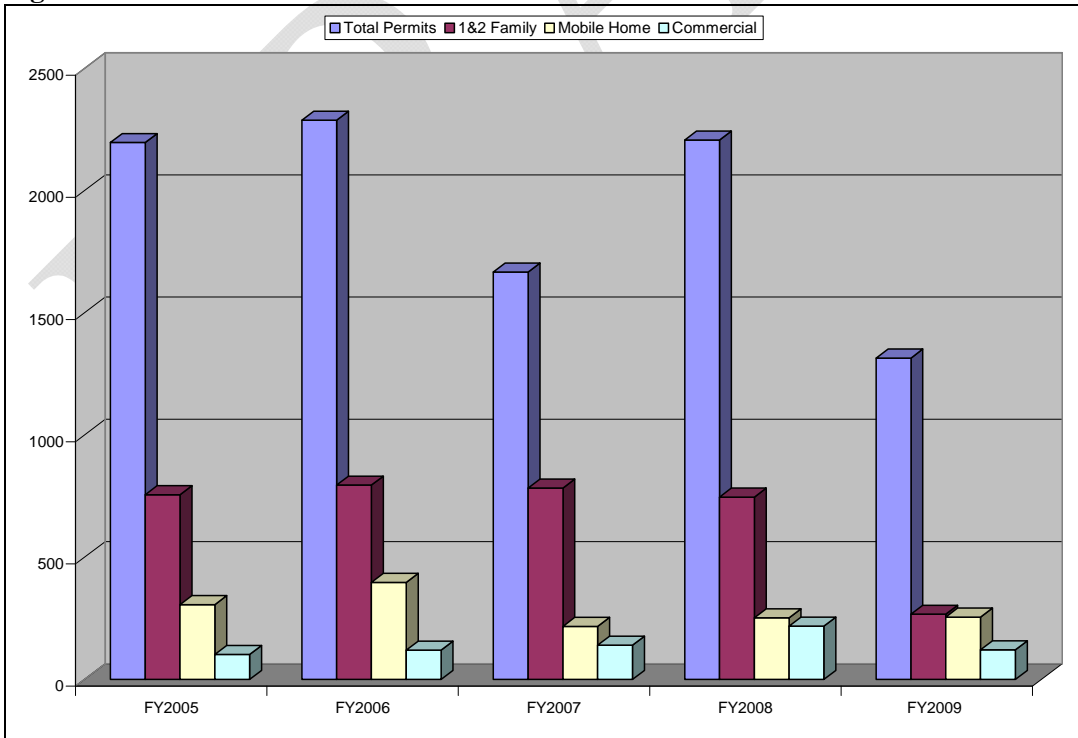
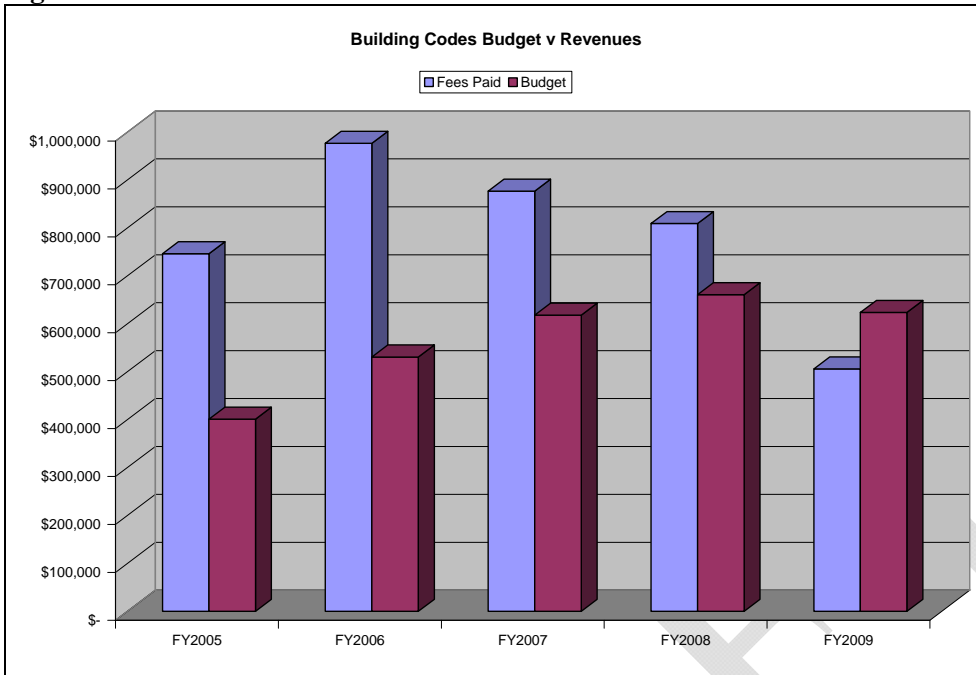


Figure H-3



Construction and Development Standards

As stated above, the Oconee County Building Codes Department began operation in July of 1999. It was at this time that Oconee County began enforcement of the state approved codes. Manufactured homes, which are constructed to federally mandated standards, are only inspected during setup, at which time state regulations governing various aspects of the process are enforced. All inspectors employed by the department are certified by the South Carolina Building Codes Council, and are required to pass a series of certification exams conducted by the International Code Council (ICC). Also, all contractors working in Oconee must be licensed or registered (depending on the particular project) by the state of South Carolina. As a result of the actions of the Building Codes Department, overall quality in construction activity in Oconee County has increased significantly. While Oconee County has traditionally been fortunate to have a pool of good builders to provide safe, high-quality structures for the public, there have been instances when less-scrupulous individuals have taken advantage of Oconee's citizens. Active code enforcement, therefore, offers Oconee's citizens a much higher level of protection than was available to them before. New efforts were promoted to ensure cooperation with other departments and agencies to safeguard the public and ease the permitting process. In 2006, the County added a Fire Marshal position to Building codes to facilitate fire inspections. Also the 911 addressing coordinator was moved from the GIS map room to Building Codes to smooth the progress of both construction permitting and zoning. In 2008 staff obtained certification as floodplain managers to help with FEMA mandated flood management. Although having a smaller staff, by 2008, Oconee Building Codes provided similar or better service than surrounding counties in services provided.

Analysis

An examination of Oconee County's housing reveals much strength. The county is blessed with a wide variety of housing options; however there is a need for more affordable housing not only in Oconee but also in the region. In addition, the median year of construction for housing stock is 1972, which is either roughly similar to, or in some cases, younger than the housing stock in other counties of the region. While it is true that most of the newest high-cost single-family units are being located near the county's lakes, it is still possible to find units representing all price levels throughout the county; although they are becoming harder to find. Except for lakefront units, which are typically among the most expensive locations, it is still possible for individuals to find at least some housing suitable to their economic situation in most areas of the county, although this trend is changing. Another positive aspect of Oconee's housing is the high ownership rate, which can be seen as an indicator of stability at the community level. In spite of a large inflow of people, which in some circumstances may prove to be a detriment, newcomers to Oconee have helped to raise the level of ownership. Many recent arrivals, particularly retirees, have purchased or built homes before they move into the county. Overall, the county has reaped many benefits from the effects of the large numbers of newcomers.

One apparent weakness in the current housing stock is the low number of available mid-level housing units. Low-cost housing needs are generally being met by a mix of subsidized multi-family dwellings, older single-family units (both rented and owned), and a rapidly increasing manufactured home supply. At the other end of the economic scale is high-cost housing, which is easily attained by those that can afford it. The supply of good quality mid-level housing units, however, is restricted. Part of the problem stems from the attractiveness of the county itself, for as long as Oconee continues to draw a large number of retirees desiring higher-cost housing, many of the area's developers will continue to develop profitable communities of higher-cost custom homes. Another factor lies in the limited development of the sewer system, which is currently restricted to areas near the municipalities. Land prices also contribute to the problem and, in Oconee, they are climbing faster than the average person can afford, which increases the problem of providing good quality, mid-level affordable housing. Still, with an average cost per housing unit that is significantly higher than neighboring counties, and is in fact more than twice the average of some upstate counties, upper-end housing is dominating the housing scene.

Some of the problems affecting housing in Oconee County, that continue to be of concern, include: the persistence of substandard housing; locating homes with septic systems in environmentally sensitive areas; losing prime agricultural land to development; and dealing with the effects of incompatible land-uses located next to residential areas. (Most of these issues are dealt with in detail in the Land Use Element.)

Housing Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Housing Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Continue to monitor closely Oconee County's compliance with state and federal air-quality standards, adopting and maintaining reduction strategies as necessary.
2. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
3. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
4. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
5. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.
6. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.



Economic Development Element

Overview

This element examines historic trends and projections concerning Oconee County's labor force, commuting patterns, employment characteristics and trends, infrastructure, and other matters influencing the economic growth of Oconee County. In addition, the latest census data and employment trend information will be used to analyze the county's economic base. This element will also include statements of goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County.

Labor Force

Population

Oconee County's labor force is primarily drawn from a local population that has grown steadily during the last several decades. According to the 2000 Census, the number of county residents rose 15.2% between 1990 and 2000, reaching 66,215 residents at the time of the count. Population projections for 2008 show an estimated 71,274 residents, a 7.1% increase from the 2000 count. See Table ED-1 for a historical view of the growth of Oconee County's population.

Table ED-1

Oconee County Population 1950-2000, w/2008 Projections						
1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
39,050	40,204	40,728	48,611	57,494	66,215	71,274

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table ED-2

Comparison of Population Change Upstate South Carolina Counties: 1990-2000, 2000-2008 Projections		
County	1990-2000 Percent Change	2000-2008 Percent Change
Oconee	15.2%	7.6%
Abbeville	9.7%	-2.9%
Anderson	14.2%	10.3%
Cherokee	18.0%	3.5%
Greenville	18.6%	15.4%
Greenwood	11.3%	3.4%
Laurens	19.7%	0.2%
Pickens	18.0%	5.6%
Spartanburg	11.9%	10.6%
Union	-1.5%	-7.4%
Total South Carolina	15.1%	11.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table ED-2 shows that in the 2000 Census South Carolina was one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Oconee County was ranked near the middle of the upstate region, and slightly ahead of the state as a whole. This trend continues as indicated by the 7.6% change as listed in the 2007 projection. It should be noted that changes in population totals are affected by a number of factors, including births, deaths, and migration. As such, Oconee County's growth results from a combination of variables. See Table ED-3 for a comparison of the components of change influencing Oconee and other upstate South Carolina counties.

Table ED-3

Components of Population Change in Upstate South Carolina, 1990-2000 and 2000-2007 Estimate								
County		Total Change	Number of Births	Number of Deaths	Total Natural Increase (Births - Deaths)	Percent of Total Change Due to Natural Increase (%)	Net Migration	Percent of Total Change Due to Migration (%)
Oconee	2000	8,721	7,629	5,716	1,913	21.9	6,808	78.1
	2007	4,538	5,816	4,965	851	---	3,950	---
Abbeville	2000	2,305	3,262	2,349	913	39.6	1,392	60.3
	2007	-710	2,244	1,805	439	---	-1,025	---
Anderson	2000	20,563	20,815	15,173	5,642	27.4	14,921	72.6
	2007	14,241	16,231	13,228	3,003	---	11,965	---
Cherokee	2000	8,031	6,889	4,602	2,287	28.5	5,744	71.5
	2007	1,478	5,130	4,163	967	---	738	---
Greenville	2000	59,489	49,278	29,017	20,261	34.1	39,228	65.9
	2007	48,631	40,833	24,502	16,331	---	34,076	---
Greenwood	2000	6,704	9,158	6,377	2,781	41.5	3,923	58.5
	2007	1,987	6,447	4,991	1,456	---	840	---
Laurens	2000	11,435	8,258	6,660	1,598	14.0	9,837	86.0
	2007	29	5,826	5,341	485	---	-155	---
Pickens	2000	16,861	12,660	8,082	4,578	27.2	12,283	72.8
	2007	5,246	9,378	6,687	2,691	---	3,031	---
Spartanburg	2000	26,998	33,040	23,536	9,504	35.2	17,494	64.8
	2007	21,752	24,996	18,946	6,050	---	16,859	---
Union	2000	-456	3,897	3,566	331	---	-787	---
	2007	-2,111	2,447	2,683	-236	---	-1,746	---

Source: US Census Bureau

The regional labor force is somewhat transient. A number of individuals reside in a different area than they work. The Oconee County Economic Development Commission tracks labor statistics from a number of neighboring counties to determine the level of the available work force. According to the South Carolina Employment Security Commission, in December of 2008, Oconee County's labor force numbered 30,120, with 2,323 (or 10.6%) listed as unemployed. However, considering the reported number of unemployed from surrounding counties (Anderson, Greenville and Pickens Counties CSA), the regional total topped 44,000.

At the time the 2000 Census was taken, approximately 20,500 Oconee County residents worked within their home county's borders, with another 8,900 leaving to work elsewhere. Of this group, adjoining Pickens County drew the largest portion (approximately 4,200), with Anderson and Greenville Counties each attracting less than 2,000. At the same time, however, only a little more than 5,000 people from other counties were employed within Oconee County's borders. Again, neighboring Pickens County ranked first, sending Oconee County over 2,300 of its citizens, followed next by Anderson County (approximately 1,200) and Greenville County (approximately 400). Other counties furnishing significant groups included Laurens, Spartanburg, and Richland Counties in South Carolina; and Stephens and Hart Counties in Georgia. See Table ED-5 for information that is more detailed.

Table ED-4

Oconee County Commuting Patterns: Selected Counties			
County	Commuting To Oconee	Commuting From Oconee	Net Commuting
Pickens (SC)	2,331	4,192	-1,861
Anderson (SC)	1,274	1,770	-496
Greenville (SC)	396	1,442	-1,046
Laurens (SC)	164	12	+152
Spartanburg (SC)	112	305	-193
Richland (SC)	107	27	+80
Stephens (GA)	144	262	-118
Hart (GA)	93	15	+78

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age Distribution

One potential key challenge facing future economic development in Oconee County will be maintaining a sufficiently youthful workforce. Oconee County, like many other regions across the nation, is already beginning to experience the effects of the aging of the "baby boomers", those born immediately following World War II between 1946 and 1964. Unlike most other areas, however, Oconee County has become a lure to a large number of retirees from other regions. As a result, the median age of Oconee's population (the age at which half of the population is older and half is younger) is increasing faster than most areas. The 2000 Census revealed that the median age of the United States is the highest that it has ever been, rising 2.4 years over the previous decade to 35.3 years of age; during the same

period, the median age of Oconee’s population rose from 35.6 years in 1990 to 39.5 years in 2000. Therefore, while the aging of the “baby boomers” is expected to continue driving the nation’s population upward at least through the year 2015, Oconee County continues to feel the impact of added retirees as noted by 2007 projections. (U.S. Census Bureau) See Table ED-6.

Table ED-5

Profile of Age Groups in Oconee County in 1990, 2000 and 2007 (Estimate)								
Age Group (years)	1990		2000		Percent Change 1990	2007		Percent Change 2000
	Number	Percent of Population	Number	Percent of Population		Number	Percent of Population	
Under 5	3,571	6.2	3,996	6.0	-.2	4,144	5.9	-.1
5-9	*		4,247	6.4	---	4,102	5.8	-.6
10-14	*		4,338	6.6	---	4,345	6.1	-.5
15-19	*		4,090	6.2	---	4,194	5.9	-.3
20-24	*		3,752	5.7	---	3,877	5.5	-.2
25-34	**		8,487	12.8	---	8,940	12.6	-.2
35-44	**17,237	30.0	9,625	14.5	---	9,207	13.0	-1.5
45-54	6,817	11.9	9,310	14.1	2.2	9,927	14.0	-.1
55-59	3,120	5.5	4,254	6.4	.9	4,746	6.7	.3
60-64	2,937	5.1	3,805	5.7	.6	4,454	6.3	.6
65-74	4,967	8.6	6,237	9.4	.8	7,225	10.2	.8
75-84	2,353	4.1	3,225	4.9	.8	4,269	6.0	1.1
85 and over	585	1.0	849	1.3	.3	1,323	1.9	.6
Total population	57,494	100	66, 215	100	---	70,753	100	---

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Racial Mix

While 89.1% percent of Oconee County residents were counted in the white racial group in the 2000 Census (down from 90.5% in 1990), statewide the percentage was much lower at just over 67%. Also, Oconee County’s African American/Black population decreased slightly, being measured at 8.4%. As a result, it is easy to see that the makeup of the area’s work force is slowly becoming more diversified. Indeed, one of the most noticeable changes among Oconee County’s residents is the growth in the number of Hispanics, which by 2000 had come to represent almost 2.5% of the county’s total population. (U.S. Census Bureau)

It should be pointed out that, although there is currently no data available to either confirm or deny the belief, many local officials feel that the Hispanic population was significantly undercounted during the 2000 Census. The actual number, therefore, is likely to be significantly higher than what is reflected in most official documents. And though some non-Hispanics see this growth as a potential problem, many in Oconee County's manufacturing community see the influx of Hispanic workers to be a positive factor. In spite of many being limited in formal education and advanced technical training, the Hispanic employee is generally regarded as being bright, hard working, and conscientious; getting to work everyday on time is extremely important to most. Of course, there are some challenges facing this group, not the least of which is a widespread weakness in comprehension of the English language, and the well-known problem of obtaining legal documentation to obtain work. This population segment will continue to increase in number in coming years, and will likely become a very important portion of Oconee County's work force.

See Table ED-7 for a more detailed breakdown of Oconee County's racial composition.

Table ED-6

Racial Composition of Oconee County's Population in 2000, w/ 2007 Projections									
	Total Population	Race							Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
		One Race							
		Total (One Race)	White	Black or African American	Am. Indian & Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	
2000 Estimate Base	66,215	65,793	59,796	5,577	159	247	14	422	1,562
2007 Estimate	70,753	70,161	63,890	5,739	194	322	16	592	2,500
Population Growth 2000-2007	6.9%	6.6%	6.8%	2.9%	22.0%	30.4%	14.3%	40.3%	60.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Education

Education level is one of the most important factors in measuring the potential of any work force. In the past, Oconee County's work force was primarily employed in textiles and agricultural pursuits, technical demands were relatively low. Today, however, employers must hire individuals possessing the academic skills that will enable them to complete a broad spectrum of technical training. Therefore, as the region continues to attract more and more high-tech industries, it will be critical to upgrade the overall education level of Oconee County's work force.

According to information from the South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, in 2000, over 11% of Oconee County adults older than 25 years of age had less than a 9th grade education. In addition, another 15% of this age group had attended high school but failed to attain a diploma. Of the rest of those 25 years of age and up, 16.2% had some college; 6.3% had an Associate's Degree; 11.0% had a Bachelor's Degree; and 7.1% had a graduate or professional degree.

Table ED-8 compares Oconee County's high school attendance (2007-2008 school year) with other upstate South Carolina counties.

Table ED-7

SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILES, 2008					
Upstate School Districts					
SCHOOL DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	ATTENDANCE RATE (%)	% END-OF-COURSE PASSAGE RATE	GRADUATION RATE (%)	DROPOUT RATE (%)
Abbeville	3,533	95.6%	63.7%	79.0%	1.8%
Anderson 1	9,173	95.8%	83.6%	81.0%	1.7%
Anderson 2	3,768	95.8%	76.8%	74.1%	4.8%
Anderson 3	2,647	94.9%	67.1%	67.3%	2.7%
Anderson 4	2,849	96.2%	77.6%	74.4%	5.0%
Anderson 5	12,390	95.0%	70.1%	72.7%	4.6%
Cherokee	9,362	96.0%	63.3%	78.7%	8.3%
Greenville	69,443	96.2%	71.2%	73.3%	3.8%
Greenwood 50	9,354	96.6%	71.1%	77.0%	5.2%
Greenwood 51	1,121	96.0%	58.5%	86.7%	5.9%
Greenwood 52	1,641	96.4%	83.1%	89.9%	1.2%
Laurens 55	6,068	97.0%	73.1%	67.0%	7.5%
Laurens 56	3,314	95.2%	61.3%	75.9%	0.9%
Oconee	10,716	95.8%	71.6%	76.2%	4.2%
Pickens	16,658	95.4%	74.6%	66.7%	6.2%
Spartanburg 1	5,100	95.6%	67.3%	78.6%	0.8%
Spartanburg 2	9,804	96.6%	68.3%	79.6%	4.0%
Spartanburg 3	3,086	95.2%	76.0%	74.7%	1.5%
Spartanburg 4	3,013	95.2%	75.9%	88.4%	0.2%
Spartanburg 5	7,197	96.1%	74.8%	71.8%	4.8%
Spartanburg 6	10,238	97.1%	70.5%	78.0%	2.7%
Spartanburg 7	7,619	94.4%	58.3%	68.5%	7.5%
Union	4,701	94.4%	62.9%	73.2%	0.6%

Source: 2008 Annual District Report Cards; South Carolina Department of Education

Although Oconee County must continue to work hard to improve some aspects of educating its work force, there are bright spots. One of these can be found in Average

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores, a key measure used by colleges and universities in their admissions process. Oconee County students typically rank high in the state, establishing the School District of Oconee County as one of the leading public school districts in the region. Table ED-9 compares Oconee County SAT scores with both state and national results from 2008.

Table ED-8

Average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Results: 2008				
	Writing	Verbal	Math	Composite
Oconee County	501	516	488	1017
South Carolina	484	496	471	980
National	497	510	488	1007

Source: School District of Oconee County

Personal Income

Oconee County's per capita personal income typically ranks among the highest in upstate South Carolina, in 2008 reaching \$31,675. This figure reflects an increase of 13.6% since 2000, and is second only in the upstate region to Greenville County. Table ED-10 compares 2008 per capita personal income levels throughout upstate South Carolina.

Table ED-9

Per Capita Personal Income in Selected Upstate South Carolina Counties: 2008		
County	Amount (in dollars)	Rank
Oconee	31,675	2
Abbeville	23,829	10
Anderson	29,084	3
Cherokee	24,794	9
Greenville	35,076	1
Greenwood	27,297	5
Laurens	26,237	7
Pickens	26,624	6
Spartanburg	28,971	4
Union	26,230	8

Source: South Carolina Department of Revenue

Union Membership

In 2003, only one unionized facility was located in Oconee County, with just 35 members. (Appalachian Council of Governments) When compared to the total size of the workforce, the small-unionized percentage proves to be extremely attractive to industrial prospects interested in locating in Oconee County.

Major Employment Sectors

Manufacturing

Oconee County is recognized as one of the six Upstate counties that comprise South Carolina's most progressive industrialized region. In 2008, this area announced capital investments of approximately \$720 million, amounting to 17.8 percent of the state total. During this same period, the six-county region announced the creation of more than ¼ of the state's new jobs.

Table ED-11 illustrates the amount of capital investment reported in Oconee County between 2000 and 2008.

Table ED-10

Capital Investment in Oconee County: 2000-2008	
Year	Dollars Invested (Millions)
2000	24.0
2001	26.9
2002	28.0
2003	37.8
2004	63.1
2005	44.0
2006	19.2
2007	72.9
2008	67.5

Source: Appalachian Council of Governments

According to information from the Oconee County Economic Development Commission, 2007-2008 saw a significant increase in capital investment, growing to over \$140 million.

Oconee County is centrally located between Atlanta and Charlotte on South Carolina's I-85 corridor, a fact that has proven to be one of the county's greatest assets in both recruiting new industry, and strengthening an increasingly diverse business base. Having already attracted corporate headquarters, high-tech manufacturers, and automobile-related suppliers, Oconee County's leaders strive to maintain a pro-business attitude that insures businesses can compete and thrive.

In past decades, Oconee County has at times sought its own path in creating a track record of successful economic development. Recent economic and political changes, however, have necessitated the county to seek partners in maintaining its growing prosperity; in today's economy, many challenges can only be overcome by taking a regional approach. Therefore, Oconee County has joined the Upstate Alliance, a 10-county partnership of community leaders, economic developers, and private companies. Working together, these various individuals and entities are committed to promoting economic development and to solving common problems across the entire region.

The potential benefits of taking a regional approach to economic development were evidenced early on when, in September 2003, the Upstate Alliance helped bring about one of the most significant economic development announcements in the history of South Carolina, Clemson University's International Center for Automotive Research (ICAR). However, it will take years to bring to fruition, this joint venture between the university and BMW Automotive is expected to lure a wide range of automobile-related businesses into the region, placing the Upstate firmly at the forefront of automotive research. As such, the investment brought into the region by the facility is destined to influence the economic makeup of not only Oconee County and its Upstate Alliance partners, but the rest of the state as well.

Tourism

Based on reports provided by SC Parks, Recreation & Tourism (SCPRT), the tourism industry is the second largest employer in the state. In Oconee County, there are over 1,800 people employed in the tourism industry with more than \$20,000,000 in payroll. Among the revenues received through tourism-related activities are retail sales taxes, accommodations taxes, excise taxes, admissions taxes, income taxes, local option sales taxes, hospitality taxes, property taxes, and business license fees. While the data for 2008 is not yet available, SCPRT also reports that in 2007, Oconee County was fourth fastest growing tourism industry in the state.

South Carolina contracted with the McNulty Group to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for each region of the state. Oconee County is bundled in the same region as Greenville, Anderson, Pickens, Spartanburg and Cherokee counties. The first draft of this study places significant emphasis on the natural resources of Oconee County. In fact, both the Greenville and Anderson CVBs have a picture of an Oconee County waterfall on the cover of their visitors guide. Additionally, both of our neighboring CVBs promote our area to their tourists.

As a result of the growing tourism market in Oconee County, a new Convention & Visitors Bureau was established in September of 2008. The Mountain Lakes CVB is solely funded by local and state accommodations taxes. The primary objective and focus of the CVB is to put "heads in beds". It has been statistically proven by the Smith Travel Industry that on average, every tourist that stays overnight will spend \$120 in addition to the cost of

the room. Therefore, for every 100-room nights sold, the additional economic impact to the county will be \$12,000.

Using existing data and statistics as provided by the SCPRT, it is quite clear that tourism is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the state and county's leading industry.

Table ED-11

Accommodations Tax Collections by Fiscal Year* 2004 - 2007			
County/ MSA / ACOG Region/ Upstate Region / State			
COUNTY	FISCAL YEAR 2004-05	FISCAL YEAR 2005-06	FISCAL YEAR 2006-07
Oconee	132,431	137,974	128,996

Source: SC Department of Revenue

* The fiscal year covers a the period beginning July 1 and ending June 30

Table ED-11 shows that Oconee County's accommodations taxes increased by almost 9% during two years. At the same time, South Carolina Office of Research & Statistics reports that the statewide average increased only 4.2%.

Agriculture

As in so many other areas of the South, Oconee County's economic history is closely tied to agriculture. In recent decades, however, the area's economy has become much more diverse, with today only a small percentage of area residents relying on farming for their primary source of income. In spite of the fact that many have abandoned agriculture for other pursuits, the overall amount of income generated by farming-related activities in Oconee County remains significant. Table ED-11 shows information regarding farms and farm size in Oconee County.

Table ED-12

Farm Data	
2002	
Number of Farms	878
Land in Farms	78,349 acres
Avg. Size of Farm	89 acres

Source: Clemson University Agriculture Extension

In 2002 (the latest available to date) Oconee County was home to 878 farms, totaling 78,349 acres of land. This equates to an average farm size of approximately 89 acres. The vast majority of Oconee County's agricultural production is focused on livestock (which includes poultry), with field crops accounting for only 5% of the total yield. Table ED-11 illustrates the proportion of agricultural sales in Oconee County for 2005.

Table ED-13

Agricultural Sales in Oconee County: 2005		
	Dollars	Rank in State
Crops	4,209,000	--
Livestock	77,812,000	--
Total	82,021,000	5

Source: Clemson University Agriculture Extension

It is commonly known that Oconee County's poultry industry ranks near the top of the state. Table ED-12 compares the county's 2005 production in livestock and livestock products, egg production and broilers.

Table ED-14

Livestock Production/Sales in Oconee County: 2005	
Reported Livestock and Livestock Products	Number
Cattle and Calves	18,300
Egg Production	23,800,000
Broilers	25,936,000

Source: Clemson University Agriculture Extension

Table ED-13 lists Oconee County's major cash crops, acres harvested in 2002, yield per acre, total reported production, and the county's ranking within South Carolina.

Table ED-15

Major Oconee County Crops: 2005				
Crop	Acres Harvested	Reported Yield per Acre	Total Production	Rank
Corn for Grain	500	62 bushels	31,200 bushels	26
Hay	12,500	2.1 tons	26,000 tons	13
Soybeans	600	20 bushels	12,000 bushels	28
Winter Wheat	900	52 bushels	46,800 bushels	26
Apples	250	5,755 pounds	1,438,750 pounds	2

Source: Clemson University Agriculture Extension

Perhaps no other crop is more associated with Oconee County than apples, traditionally a major cash crop grown primarily in the county's western foothills. In recent years, however, pressure from imports, rising production costs, and losses from various weather-related events have led many Oconee County producers to curtail or abandon the crop. Oconee County remains ranked near the top of apple-producing counties in South Carolina.

Timber

Oconee County's abundant forestlands have served as a source of wealth for a large number of local residents throughout the county's history. The proportion of Oconeeans who make their living in forestry has diminished in recent decades; the industry continues to bring considerable revenue into the area. See Table ED-15 for more information.

Table ED-16

2005 Oconee County Timber Harvests		
Stumpage Value Paid to All Owners	Delivered Value of Timber	Local Value to Harvest and Transport

\$6,384,971	\$10,273,200	\$3,888,229
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Source: Clemson University Agriculture Extension

Infrastructure

The development and expansion of infrastructure may very well prove to be one of the greatest challenges to future economic development in Oconee County. Regardless of the difficulty, however, such issues must be dealt with, for without sufficient roads, water, sewer treatment, and other critical infrastructure items, modern businesses cannot survive. Moreover, as operations looking to locate or expand in an area need to be functioning as soon as possible, having immediate access to pre-existing infrastructure is vital. For example, it is unlikely that any major project offering to bring needed jobs into a community will be willing to delay months for the installation of a water line or sewer line, especially as other areas offer everything needed for immediate connection. Therefore, in today's economy, time is an expensive commodity, with successful economic development hinging on planning for future development and having critical infrastructure in place, ready to serve businesses when they need it.

Master Plan

Oconee County is currently in the process of completing an Infrastructure Master Plan that will chart a course to greater economic prosperity in coming years. Drafted by Goldie & Associates under the direction of County Council, the plan provides various proposals for developing key growth regions of the county. Chief among these areas is the I-85 corridor in southern Oconee County, an area that, with the proper planning and investment by the local government, will provide tremendous benefits to the entire county. With the installation of adequate wastewater treatment capacity and water supplies, the area is expected to become home to a number of industrial and business operations, enhancing the county's tax base and providing high-quality employment opportunities for generations to come.

Industrial Parks

The identification of prime industrial property is a vital component of planning for future economic development. Until it is known what areas have the greatest potential for meeting the needs of businesses, crucial infrastructure cannot be put in place to attract investors. Given the fact that most businesses scouting for potential locations are looking for sites that offer quick start-up times, the best tool for attracting new investment is an industrial park with infrastructure ready to accommodate. To date, Oconee County has developed only one such property, the Oconee County Commerce Center, located near the intersection of Highways S.C. 11 and U.S. 123. Although a relatively small project, the short time spent in developing it greatly expanded the county's attractiveness to potential investors. In addition, the Commerce Center provided county leaders invaluable experience, for future parks in areas like the I-85 corridor (ideally much larger projects that encompass from 250-500 acres) will be a key part of developing Oconee County's full economic potential.

The cost of not having sufficient infrastructure serving prime industrial properties can be easily seen in lost opportunities. According to the Oconee County Economic Development Commission, in fiscal year 2003-2004 alone, Oconee County was unable to compete for three major businesses looking to locate in the region due to insufficient water

supply and sewer treatment in the I-85 area. These projects offered over \$440 million in investment, and they would have created approximately 1,100 jobs.

Airport

The Oconee County Airport, owned and operated by the county, is a tremendous asset in both serving existing businesses, and recruiting new investment dollars. In fact, a series of upgrades in recent years has placed it into the top ranks of similar operations in the region. Still, efforts are currently underway to expand further on this success, including expanding the runway to 5,000 feet to accommodate larger business jets, a modern aircraft instrument landing system, and additional hanger space. These improvements are expected to produce a number of results, including the possible development of a nearby excellent business park, and joint ventures between the county and nearby Clemson University.

Water

Oconee County's future success in economic development is directly tied to the guarantee of an adequate water supply. Currently, there are 5 major water suppliers in Oconee County, including the municipalities of Salem, Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster; and the Pioneer Rural Water District. There are a number of smaller suppliers primarily serving individual communities scattered across the county. A number of areas in Oconee County remain reliant on personal wells, which greatly restricts the number of suitable areas for industrial development. Therefore, expansion of a properly planned water supply system is a issue in planning for future economic development.

Sewer System

Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority's existing wastewater collection, transportation, and treatment system is primarily focused on serving the areas in and near the towns of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster. As a result, many areas of the county offer little in the way of attractive sites for businesses dependent on sewer. The I-85 area of southern Oconee County, for example, in spite of having a number of sites with easy access to the transportation artery, lacks access to a sewer system. Other areas, as well, are similarly restricted, making the availability of wastewater facilities one of the main priorities in Oconee County's near-term economic development efforts.

Transportation

As Oconee County's road system has long been able to provide easy access to most areas of the county, the major focus of local roadwork is maintenance of the existing routes. Given the current rate of population growth and development, however, this will likely have to change in the near future, for main thoroughfares are already becoming seriously overtaxed during peak periods. Such is the case of the U.S. 76/123 corridor, which in recent years has become the primary transportation artery for a large portion of the area's development. Other areas are currently experiencing the side effects of development, or will soon be. Among these are:

S.C. 183- from Walhalla to the S.C. 130 intersection

U.S. 76- from Westminster to the Georgia state line

Sheep Farm Road- from U.S. 76/123 to S.C. 28
S.C. 130- from S.C. 28/U.S. 76/123 to S.C. 183
S.C. 28- from Walhalla north to the Georgia state line
Old Clemson Highway- from U.S. 76/123 to S.C. 130

Of course, it should be noted that many of the roads are owned and maintained by the State of South Carolina, leaving Oconee County with only limited input in the way that they are improved. Still, counties are able to influence the state's prioritization of projects, particularly if such projects impact adopted development plans. Therefore, though the state may have the final say in the manner in which the construction and maintenance of its roads, plans for expanding Oconee County's economic prosperity should include consideration of all road-related issues.

Solid Waste

Oconee County currently lacks a municipal landfill to handle the solid waste produced within the county; instead, it is disposed of in a Homer, Georgia facility, a fact that worries a number of county leaders. However, the county does have a current construction and demolition landfill with an expected life of 20-25 years with an additional area to expand on an older landfill that could add an estimated 10 more years of life. As the cost of transporting the waste out of the county will certainly rise in coming years, dealing with solid waste is likely to be a growing challenge to future economic development. Still, as state rules prevent the establishment of a new landfill within the county, there are currently few options. However, given that disposal of solid waste is the subject of much research across the world, the future is likely to bring a number of new technologies that will not only enable Oconee County to dispose of its own solid waste, but also possibly even profit from it. For now, however, this issue must not be forgotten when planning for Oconee County's future.

Analysis

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, Oconee County possesses the necessary assets to insure a very prosperous economic future. Its workforce has proven itself bright, hardworking, and able to meet the requirements of a wide variety of businesses; any existing or developing industry should have little difficulty in meeting its labor needs in the county. With the support of the region's world-class educational and technical training system, virtually any type of operation should be able to choose from an large pool of well-qualified employees. Already, the county is home to a diversified business base, evidencing the presence of a supportive environment for operations looking to locate in the region. There is little doubt, therefore, that Oconee County has many of the basic tools in place to insure its future economic prosperity. Still, there are some challenges that will have to be overcome before the county's economic potential can be achieved.

There is no doubt that the effort to expand and develop the infrastructure necessary to insure continued prosperity in Oconee County will require a tremendous effort. And, given existing political realities, this will only be accomplished with the cooperation of a number of entities; chief among these, of course, are the area municipalities. Too often in the past, infrastructure projects have been isolated efforts, typically a single party upgrading their individual system with little or no thought given to the impact on the rest of the county. Such attitudes, however, must become outdated if the county is to succeed in an ever-changing modern economy. Today, the cost of development necessitates the sharing of burdens whenever possible, in the end not only both reducing redundancy of effort and the price paid by individual partners, but also magnifying the end results far beyond what could have been achieved singly. It is imperative, therefore, for all Oconee County governmental entities to look beyond their own immediate interests and cooperate with others around them.

Of all of the potential challenges to Oconee County's future economic prosperity, perhaps the greatest will prove to be the ability of its leaders to identify, evaluate, and plan for every eventuality that may influence the growth or decay of the county. Such planning should guide all aspects of economic development- land use, infrastructure, labor force, relationships with municipalities and other governmental entities. Perhaps most critically, adopted plans should be adhered to, even when faced with options that may seem to be more politically expedient. The establishment and maintenance of a successful economic development program involves focusing the efforts of all aspects of county government on the goal; and as such, each action taken by local leaders influences the progress made, either positively or negatively. There are no isolated decisions. Yet, with the proper commitment in place, all other hurdles become much smaller obstacles. The power to insure Oconee County's future success in economic development therefore lies within its grasp- provided sufficient focus and backbone is found to do the job.

Economic Development Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Economic Development Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future economic development in Oconee County.
2. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.
3. Initiate efforts to develop the foundation of a county stormwater management program prior to federal mandates, thereby allowing for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation possible in the event of designation.
4. Establish a program of managing both water quantity and water quality throughout the county that will ensure efficient utilization, and appropriate conservation, of our greatest natural resource.
5. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
6. Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.
7. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.
8. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
9. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
10. Continue to actively promote the recruitment of employment opportunities that provide the best lifestyle for all Oconee residents.
11. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
12. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
13. Seek local, state, and federal funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.

14. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.
15. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.
16. Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.
17. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.

DRAFT



Land Use Element

Introduction

This element focuses on the way land is used in Oconee County, and seeks to establish the direction that citizen's desire their community to grow, as well as identify the various tools deemed appropriate to guide this growth. Additionally, it examines existing usage by category, such as residential, commercial, industrial, etc., and attempts to anticipate the relative amount of land needed to accommodate future changes. The way land is utilized in a community impacts most aspects of our lives, therefore, the other elements of this Comprehensive Plan were a major consideration throughout the creation of this element.

Background

Land use in the Oconee County area has for centuries primarily been, in one way or another, focused on using the region's abundant natural resources. Situated at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the county is blessed with three distinct physiographic zones that traditionally offered a variety of opportunities for sustenance and economic gain. As a result, for centuries Oconee County's lands have supported mining, timbering, farming, and similar operations dependent on direct utilization of resources, supported by those tradesmen and merchants necessary to sustain them. Over time, communities and towns grew and prospered, developing the typical mix of service and trade activities found throughout much of the South, but the main focus of land use remained tied to our natural resources. Even the development of the textile industry beginning in the late 19th Century, which provided a major economic boost to the county, impacted land use only in limited areas, primarily in and around some of the towns. Therefore, Oconee County's historic land use patterns have been tied directly to its natural resources. In the last several decades, however, there has been a significant shift in this traditional pattern.

There are a number of factors to consider in evaluating the changes in land use patterns in Oconee County. Agriculture, for example, though still a significant part the region's economic vitality, is no longer the viable source of income for a major portion of the population it once was. The instability of markets, the cost of land and equipment, competition from foreign competitors, as well as an increasing number of regulatory requirements, has made the sustainability of a profitable operation increasingly problematic. Much the same can be said for the decrease in timber operations, as well. Therefore, the amount of land previously devoted to such activities has, in recent years, become available for other uses. At the same time, Oconee County experienced a tremendous rise in population, creating a tremendous market for housing, and spurred on the expansion of commercial areas in several areas of the county. To feed the demands associated with this

growth, a rapid conversion of many former Oconee County farms and forests into housing and commercial developments, forever changing the face of Oconee County. Given that these trends are expected to carry on into the foreseeable future, and in fact will likely speed up as the county's population continues to grow rapidly, traditional ways of land use, and those lifestyles associated with them, are going to be subjected to increasing pressure to conform with the same growing urbanization seen throughout our region. With this in mind, the goals expressed in this element will attempt to set the stage for identifying those critical challenges, and provide avenues for managing the outcomes. The decisions we make, and the successes or failures we may have in implementing the goals, will impact the lives of generations of Oconeeans in the future.

Existing Conditions

The boundaries of Oconee County encompass a total area of approximately 428,800 acres, or roughly 670 square miles. Of this, the Oconee County Geographic Information System shows almost 600 square miles are land (587 square miles in the unincorporated areas), with the balance covered by lake surface. It should be noted that, due to large federal and state property holdings (including Sumter National Forest and Clemson University), approximately 25% of the county is preserved as forest lands.

In 2008, Oconee County worked with a consultant to obtain current land use data to use as a tool for planning. As this was the first such attempt to identify usage on a countywide parcel level, it was intended to serve as a good baseline for measuring change in the future. A series of land use categories intended to delineate all of the more typical uses were defined by county staff prior to the project, and Kucera International, Inc., a world-wide geographic information consultant, reviewed each parcel and made determinations of land use based on obvious predominant utilization of the parcel. Among the information used to make the determinations included 2005 orthophotography of the county, and information from tax records. In some cases, the consultant was unable to make a reasonable determination, and the parcel's use was classed as 'Not Apparent'. For these, planning staff conducted a more detailed investigation, and in a number of instances performed site inspections to make a determination. Upon completion of the consultant's work, staff conducted a comprehensive review of the delivered information to identify any remaining errors and inconsistencies.

Following completion of the review, a series of Planning District land use maps were created. These maps were presented at a series of community meetings, with local maps highlighted at each session. Staff encouraged citizens to study the maps, paying particular attention to those parcels in and around their community. To further facilitate the review, copies were made available on the internet, along with e-mail capable comment forms. At the end of 6 meetings conducted over several months in various areas of the county, only 4 errors were identified by the public, indicating that the overall accuracy of the data was extremely high.

It should be stressed that determinations of use were made based on the predominant obvious utilization of each parcel, which in some cases required subjective determinations. This made the public review and comment opportunities all the more critical. In a few situations, the amount of information available was insufficient to make a determination with confidence; however, such cases were few. Typically, the use was apparent, or in the case of mixed uses, one was clearly more significant. For example, large timbered parcels

containing relatively small fields were designated Forest (Private). In other cases where the mix of uses appeared to be equally significant, such as would be the case for parcels utilized for both home and business, they were considered Multi Use. It is understood that, as with any task dealing with so many parcels, some errors were made in evaluating the information available. For the purposes of the project, however, based on the feedback from the public reviews, the overall trends shown are accurate.

The data divided current land use into the following categories:

- ❖ Residential Single Family
- ❖ Residential Multi-family
- ❖ Condo
- ❖ Commercial-Service
- ❖ Commercial-Industrial
- ❖ Transportation, Communications, and Utilities
- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Extraction
- ❖ Recreation
- ❖ Forest
- ❖ National and State Forest
- ❖ Multi-Use
- ❖ Undeveloped
- ❖ Not Apparent

Table LU-1 shows the distribution of the various land uses across the county as measured in the GIS:

Table LU-1

Current Land Use in Unincorporated Oconee County: 2008				
USE	Total Acreage	Number of Parcels	Percent of Total Acreage	Rank of Use
Residential Single Family	66,502	37,097	17.67	4
Residential Multi-Family	235.65	101	.06	11
Condo	133.45	745	.04	12
Commercial-Service	2,032	647	.54	8
Commercial-Industrial	1,791.83	118	.48	9
Transport., Communications, and Utilities	3,964.83	200	1.05	6

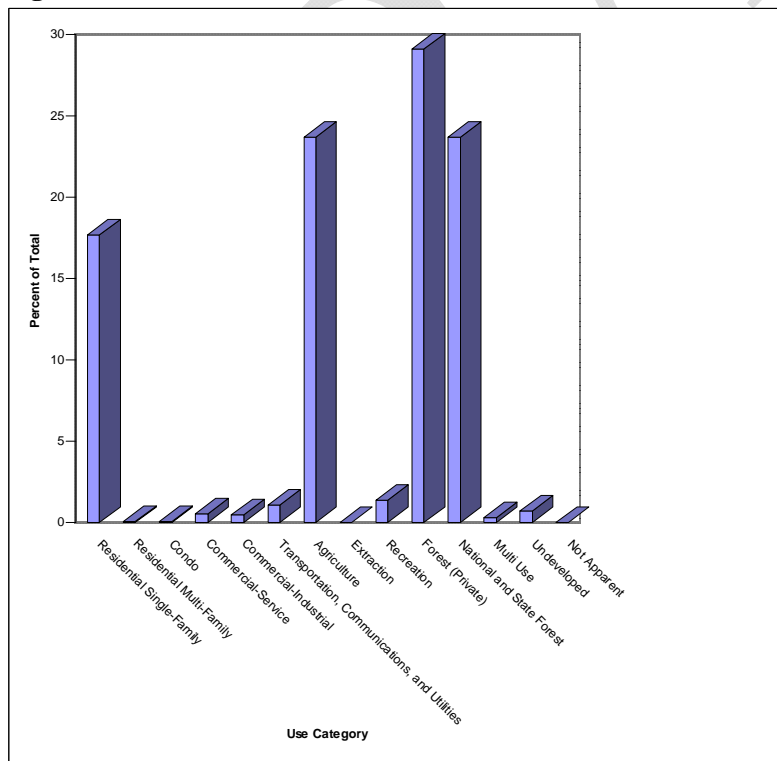
Agriculture	89,214.46	2,720	23.71	3
Extraction	82.2	4	.02	13
Recreation	5,055.14	909	1.34	5
Forest (Private)	109,600.17	3,060	29.13	1
National and State Forest	89,248.75	38	23.72	2
Multi Use	1,204.01	98	.32	10
Undeveloped	2,718.11	570	.72	7
Not Apparent	54.19	71	.01	14

Source: Oconee County Planning Department

Note on Measured Acreage shown in Table LU-1: Although it not very common today with modern surveying equipment and methods, it was not unusual in the past for parcels to be recorded as acreage 'more or less'. For example, a parcel recorded as containing '60 acres more or less' may in reality contain 63 acres- or perhaps less than 60 acres- but totals based on tax rolls typically only reflect the 60 acres. The Geographic Information System (GIS), however, bases area on digitized coordinates that establish property boundaries, resulting in much greater accuracy. Therefore, it should be expected to find at least some variation between totals on the tax rolls and in the GIS.

The chart below is a graphic representation of the percentages of the various current land uses shown in Table LU-1:

Figure LU-1

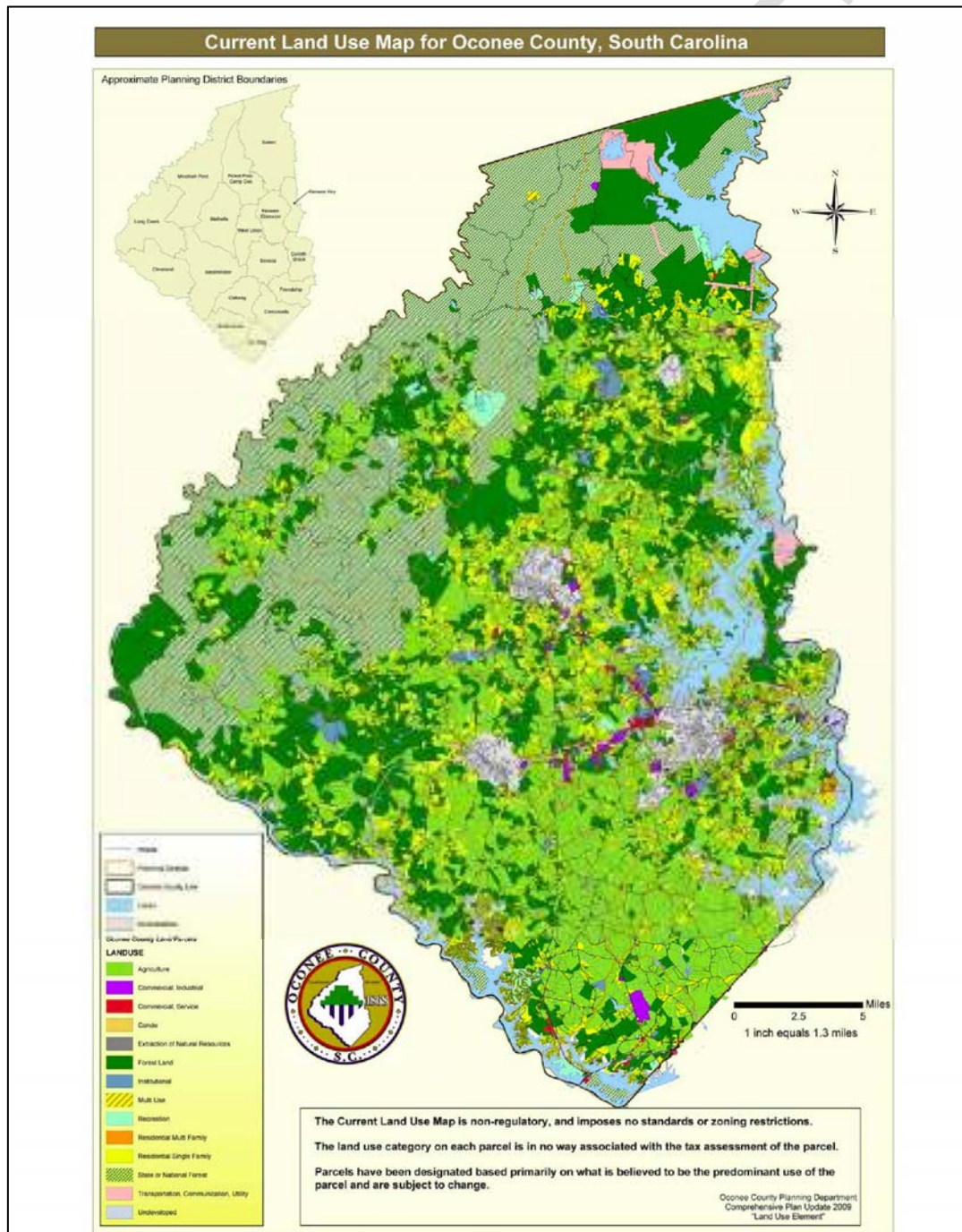


Source: Oconee County Planning Department and Tax Assessor

Not surprisingly, the largest land use categories are Forest (Private), National and State Forest, and Agriculture, with each category occupying roughly ¼ of the county acreage; the only other relatively large category is Residential Single-Family with approximately 18%. Of the remaining uses, only Transportation, Communications, and Utilities, and Recreation comprise more than 1% of total acreage.

The following map shows current land use on a parcel basis:

Figure LU-2



Current Density

In some counties, one can quickly arrive at a reasonably accurate estimate of the density of development by simply focusing on the total area of the jurisdiction. In Oconee County, however, an unusually high percentage of the land is devoted to state and federal forestlands, and is therefore not available for development. For example, Sumter National Forest alone occupies almost 80,000 acres of the county, with Clemson University and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers possessing thousands of additional acres. It is also worth noting that in spite of the rapid growth experienced in the county during the last several decades, the overall amount of land available for development has continued to drop due to an expansion of both public lands (such as the Jocassee Gorges) and the conservation of larger tracts of private lands through the acquisition of development rights by preservation groups (such as was the case with the effort to conserve portions of Stumphouse Mountain). Given that attitudes toward the conservation and preservation of greenspace have become positive in recent years, it is likely that additional lands will be removed from development in the coming decades. Therefore, in any consideration of the amount available land to support anticipated growth, it is necessary to remember that a significant portion of Oconee County is unavailable.

Growth Trends

As noted above, much of the traditional land use in Oconee County has been devoted in one manner or other to agriculture and forestry. Even relatively significant economic changes, such as was seen with the emergence of the textile industry in the late 1800's, which led many to forgo their traditional agrarian lifestyle in exchange for employment brought by the cotton mills- either directly, or in the service sector that sprang up around it- little impacted the overall land use pattern. Naturally, while much of the urbanization occurred inside the municipalities, there was some 'spill-over' into the unincorporated areas immediately adjacent, but this did not prove to be significant until the major population growth began in the 1970's.

Prior to the 1970's, life in Oconee County had remained relatively unchanged for many decades; new technologies and conveniences made their marks, of course, but overall, the county remained the rural agrarian area that it had always been. Starting during that decade, however, a number of changes made an impact on Oconee, none of them perhaps major by themselves, but as a whole, capable of changing the face of the region forever. Among the most notable of these, and one likely to be noted as a signal moment in the county's history forever, were the creation of Oconee Nuclear Station, and the recruitment of a number of high-tech industries. These new industries not only provided a major source of good jobs, but represented a steady revenue source much greater than what most counties of Oconee's size typically had. As a result, while the subsequent decline of the textile industry devastated other South Carolina counties, Oconee was able to adjust, and remain relatively prosperous. But perhaps more importantly, certainly as it is related to impacts on land use patterns in the county, the coming of the nuclear facility brought with it major changes that have not only changed today's Oconee County, but will continue far into the future.

Had the nuclear station only consisted of reactors and power transmission facilities, little would probably have separated it from other high-tech industries that have moved to the county. But the nuclear facility was different, for it resulted in the building of Lake Keowee

and Lake Jocassee. And although Oconee County already had hundreds of miles of shoreline on Lake Hartwell, which had been completed a decade earlier, there had been only limited attempts at lakefront development, most with limited success. Within only a few years of the completion of the new lakes, however, thousands of new residents were moving to Oconee County to live near the water. Perhaps this had to do with the economic situation in the 1970's and 1980's, which spurred on the 'flight to the sunbelt'; perhaps it was the impact of the relative wealth of the baby-boomers, who, unlike their parents, had the wherewithal to relocate to where they wished; or perhaps it was simply good marketing by developers. Likely, it was all of the above. Of course, we also need to factor in the overall beauty of our region, the moderate climate, relatively low cost of living, and, the fact that an increasing number of individuals were turning away from agriculture, which made more and more land available for development. But regardless of the particular reasons for the growth, the impact of the newcomers has been felt in many ways, not the least of which is that, in spite of the fact that many rural acres remain in Oconee County, in a very short time our county has become much more urban in its landscape, and increasingly, its attitudes.

Another major factor that has recently begun to show signs of impact on Oconee County's development is the continued explosive growth of nearby metropolitan areas. Already, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the boundary of the Metro-Atlanta area is only about a 45 minute drive to the south on Interstate 85, with the Greenville-Spartanburg Metro Area, much closer to the north. As a result, developers looking to take advantage of the need for housing for those working in the urban areas are turning to Oconee County for potential sites for large residential development, particularly near the interstate. It should be remembered that, although there will be a need for substantial numbers of residential units in Oconee County in the near future, large developments located in the wrong place may bring undesired results. To start with, unlike much of the development in the communities near Lake Keowee, which is owned by a large percentage of retirees or those living in other areas, the anticipated development from the urban areas would consist largely of the primary residences of working-age people, many of whom would have families. This would in turn impact a number of public facilities, particularly emergency services and the school system. Also, as the most attractive lands for such development are likely to include parts of the remaining prime farmland, we will need to truly consider the role that agriculture will play in Oconee County's future. As has been shown many times before in other locations, large-scale residential development and the commercial development that will serve it does not mix well with the dust, noise, smells and other activities associated with many agricultural practices. With farming already under severe pressures, the potential impacts of unmanaged residential growth could within a short time be devastating.

Growth Management

Oconee County's initial efforts at land use planning began in the mid-1990's when it adopted its first Comprehensive Plan. Although at the time, the state mandated a minimum of 7 specific elements be contained in a Comprehensive Plan for a jurisdiction to do unlimited land use planning, it also allowed for some planning activities with partial plans. As a result, Oconee County's first plan consisted of only 2 elements: Community Facilities Element, and Land Use Element. Because the County's intent was to implement limited land use regulations, primarily aimed at regulating the height of structures within the transition zone near the Oconee County Airport, only the elements dealing with community facilities

and land use were required. Within a short time, however, other issues arose, requiring the County to consider action beyond the scope of what the partial Comprehensive Plan would support. As a result, following the creation of the Planning Department in 1999, staff began drafting a new Comprehensive Plan containing all 7 required elements. This plan was adopted in 2004.

A number of land use regulations, some in the form of separate ordinances, and some created by amendments to existing ordinances, were adopted between the mid-1990's and 2008. These include:

- ❖ Height Restrictions Near the Airport- provides for limits on the height of structures constructed near the airport
- ❖ Group Home Regulations- limits negative secondary impacts of new group home facilities on neighbors
- ❖ Communication Tower Regulations- mandates setbacks, height limits, and other standards designed to limit unnecessary towers
- ❖ Sexually-oriented Business Regulations- imposes setbacks and other locational requirements designed to mitigate negative secondary impacts; also, requires an annual permit for all employees
- ❖ Land Development and Subdivision Regulations- sets forth standards for the design and construction of residential developments
- ❖ Tattoo Facility Regulations- establishes setbacks and other locational requirements designed to mitigate negative secondary impacts
- ❖ Vegetative Buffer Requirements- designates a 25-foot natural vegetative buffer (measured from the full-pond elevation contour) for all new developments and projects on Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee
- ❖ Sign Control Regulations- created standards for the location and size of new billboard signs

In 2008, Oconee County took perhaps its greatest leap into the realm of land use planning by adopting a zoning enabling ordinance (ZEO). Developed over a period of approximately 2 years, the ZEO was fully implemented in May 2009. The zoning program is designed to primarily introduce use limitations in phases through a combination of relatively unique methods of non-binding citizen initiatives, but retains the governing body's ability to act as it deems necessary. In brief, all parcels were initially placed in the Control-Free District, which, as the name indicates, imposes no use limitations on the parcel, but establishes the conditions necessary to overlay limited performance standards in certain areas. As a result, to implement use controls, a rezoning is necessary. Over time, as the majority of citizens in the various parts of the unincorporated areas of Oconee County desire

it, the program will increasingly provide the protection and management offered by more traditional zoning regulations.

Other Efforts

Growth management is not limited solely to governmental action, for without support and assistance from the private sector, any success will be limited. In fact, the most effective growth management programs are often a combination of public and private efforts. In Oconee County, where growth management is still in its formative stages, most early efforts have been undertaken by the government to limit or remediate problematic situations. Recently, however, there have been increased activities in the private sector aimed at managing the impact of anticipated development, particularly in the realm of conservation of properties.

One good example can be seen in the concept of developing a local conservation bank to help protect sensitive or special properties. This idea has been discussed from time to time for a number of years, but during 2008 and 2009, after a successful effort conserve a large tract near Stumphouse Mountain, the attempt began in earnest. By working with county government, the goal is to develop a fund that can be utilized to purchase development rights. Still in the early stages of development at the time of this writing, the outcome remains to be seen. But given the growing support for conservation efforts overall, the creation of a conservation bank, or other similar mechanism to help fund the preservation of special lands, should prove to be timely.

Future Growth and Development

Oconee County's future growth and development, and the changes that will likely stem from it, have led to a number of efforts aimed at translating the potential into a format easily understandable by the average citizen. One such project was sponsored by Upstate Forever, a nonprofit group focused on land use, conservation and growth management education. In 2008, Upstate Forever expanded a growth study originally focused only on counties encompassing parts of the Saluda River Watershed to include Oconee County. The resulting "Growth Projections for Upstate South Carolina", developed from work by Dr. Craig Campbell of the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University, used computer models to assemble graphic illustrations of development projections across the area through 2030. Although the project did not differentiate between types of development, the results provided a look at potential development pattern based on various ranges of population growth.

Another project, "Alternative Futures for the Seneca Watershed Sub Basin", was conducted over several years by Dr. Stephen Sperry and a group of graduate students from Clemson University. Utilizing computer modeling techniques, Dr. Sperry's group considered various scenarios and land uses, and assessed the potential impacts of each within the boundaries of the Seneca River Watershed. This multi-year project focused on the impacts of specific land uses, and the likely results on individual sub-watershed areas. Given the complexity of the project, with different methodology focused on delivering more

specific assessments than Upstate Forever's project, the results naturally differed. Regardless of the variation in specific projections, however, both stand as evidence of the growing level of interest in understanding the possible changes in Oconee County's future, with each, and others like them in the future, a useful tool for community leaders to use in formulating plans for managing the changes.

Visioning

In 2008, the Oconee Alliance sponsored a visioning process for Oconee County to outline better what county citizens wish the county to become in the next couple of decades. As part of the effort, a series of public meetings, facilitated by an experienced consultant overseen by members of a steering committee comprised of local citizens, resulted in the development of the 2028 Oconee By Choice, a 20-year plan for Oconee County. Of these goals, a significant number were either directly or indirectly related to land use, particularly among those categorized as Planned Choice and Natural Choice goal areas. The Planned Choice overview states that, "Oconee chooses smart growth and increased economic vitality with a plan that protects what is precious- a way of life, the bountiful resources of nature, and towns and countryside full of inviting warmth." To achieve this, a list of goals is set forth calling for, among other actions:

- ❖ management of growth through zoning and other land use regulations
- ❖ environmentally sound infrastructure
- ❖ reduction in the number of billboards
- ❖ management of storm water runoff
- ❖ stepped up enforcement of litter ordinance
- ❖ creation of wildlife sanctuaries
- ❖ additional incentives for land owners to preserve and create natural areas
- ❖ impact fees
- ❖ expanded public transportation

The Natural Choice overview states that, "Oconee chooses nature's beauty and a small town feel as centerpieces of its life." (15) Goals set for accomplishing this include:

- ❖ preservation of all lakes and rivers
- ❖ retention of small town and rural characteristics
- ❖ preservation of farms
- ❖ protection and expansion of natural green spaces and historic sites
- ❖ protect water and air quality
- ❖ fund an agriculture conservation bank

Implementation teams are currently working to promote the advancement of these goals with the appropriate entities.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

In December 2007, the Oconee County Economic Development Commission completed a strategic plan designed to refocus the Commission's efforts, and better situate the County to overcome impediments to expanding economic development. As was to be expected, land use issues were central to many of the goals established in the plan. Among tasks identified as necessary for success are the identification and reservation of industrial properties for the long-term future, which could be accomplished through zoning, property options, lease or lease-purchase, or staged or outright purchase. In addition, the plan calls for the identification of a growth area in the I-85 corridor, and the adoption of zoning and/or land use regulations to develop and maintain the area's economic development sustainability over time. It should be noted that the I-85 Overlay District, which was adopted by County Council in November 2008, was proposed as a result of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Future Land Use

Based on goals established in this and the other elements of this Comprehensive Plan, the 2009 Future Land Use Map sets out the manner in which the future growth of Oconee County should occur to attain these goals. The development of the map took into consideration the existing agricultural and traditional rural ways of life and highlighted scenic attributes and natural resources. The map is designed to promote quality development, with the idea that affordable workforce housing must be a part of the mix of the housing stock. The map also outlines areas suitable for fostering sustainable economic development and future growth.

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) adopted in 2008 reflects an attempt to describe how the citizens of Oconee County wish their county to grow in the near future, which, as the Comprehensive Plan was due for review in 2009, was much shorter than that which is typically found. Relatively general in nature due to a lack of detailed information on existing land use, it divided land use into Residential, Transitional Growth, Agriculture, and Traditional Rural. No attempt was made to differentiate all pockets of commercial and industrial growth, but instead, it stated that a wide mix was anticipated within the Transitional Growth areas based on availability of land and sufficient infrastructure. As for other uses, the Residential areas primarily encompass those regions near the lakes; Agricultural areas focus on those remaining prime farm areas in the southern part of the county; and all other areas, which include large tracts of National Forest lands, and which contain little if any public infrastructure, are designated as Traditional Rural.

The amendments made to the FLUM as part of the 2009 review of the Comprehensive Plan were intended to add refinement and detail, thereby enabling it to better guide growth in a manner consistent with the overall desires of the public until the next Comprehensive Plan is developed in 2014. This was at least in part made possible due to the level of discussion and sincere consideration about Oconee County's future that emerged during development of the recently adopted Zoning Enabling Ordinance. Although past efforts to develop plans and ordinances to guide growth and development always included a public input component, often with varying results, the creation of the Zoning Enabling

Ordinance brought about conversations between individuals and groups in a manner never before witnessed. Often, although the rhetoric was at times heated, the overall goals expressed were the same; it was the route taken to achieve the goal that was the point of contention.

Primary Development Areas

As is made abundantly clear throughout this document, the boundaries of Oconee County encompass an increasingly diverse mix of land uses and lifestyles. As such, any plans and regulations adopted must be created with the knowledge of these differences, for it is the consensus of Oconee County's citizens that this variation plays a vital role in the attributes most dearly held. As a result, those areas identified on the 2008 FLUM as Residential and Transitional Growth delineate the areas deemed to be most appropriate for targeted growth. Of course, given the possibility that there may be portions of those regions that, for whatever reason, may not be suitable for such designation, or, in the event that categories created in the future are appropriate as well, the concept of formal Primary Development Areas emerged. These areas, shown on the 2008 FLUM as Residential and Transitional Growth, are marked as a specific feature on later versions.

The concept of designated Primary Development Areas originated from a comprehensive review of the Land Development and Subdivision Chapter of the Oconee County Unified Performance Standards Ordinance. Completed in 2008, the review resulted in a series of amendments to the subdivision regulations, as well as the creation of a new Unified Road Standards Ordinance. The new road ordinance, which contains all standards related to the construction and maintenance of roads in Oconee County, also established rules allowing for a developer to recoup some costs associated with upgrading existing county roads. One of the key components of the process was the creation of a road upgrade list by the County Engineer. This list, which focuses on the safety of existing county roads, prioritizes those roads in areas deemed most suitable for future development. While roads in any part of the county are to be maintained at a safe level, those inside the boundaries of Primary Development Areas are to be upgraded to deal with anticipated growth and development. It should be noted that there are provisions for developers to receive additional consideration in exchange for including a portion of the proposed development as affordable housing.

Although the Unified Road Standards Ordinance contains the only standards referencing the Primary Development Areas at the time of this writing, it is anticipated that others may be adopted in the future. Therefore, delineating the boundaries of a Primary Development Area should be undertaken with careful consideration. Areas deemed to be sensitive or special, for example, should be excluded, for the purpose of designation is to identify those areas to which anticipated or desired growth and development is to be guided.

The mechanisms to be used in accomplishing this may take any number of forms, from standards and regulations, to various development-related bonuses, or other appropriate assistance or enticement sponsored by Oconee County. Through whatever method used, the goal of the Primary Development Area is to provide for promotion of sustainable quality development, while protecting and conserving those areas considered too special to lose.

Future Land Use Map

A Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a non-regulatory map that acts as a guide for land use planning by graphically illustrating what citizens want their community to look like in the coming years. The Oconee County FLUM is therefore intended to be used as a reference in considering any action on behalf of the County that may impact land use. The map divides regions of the county into categories that represent what the *predominant land use* of that particular area is to be; in no way are the categories to be considered exclusive, but merely a standard by which to weigh proposals related to land usage.

The following classifications are reflected on the Oconee County Future Land Use Map:

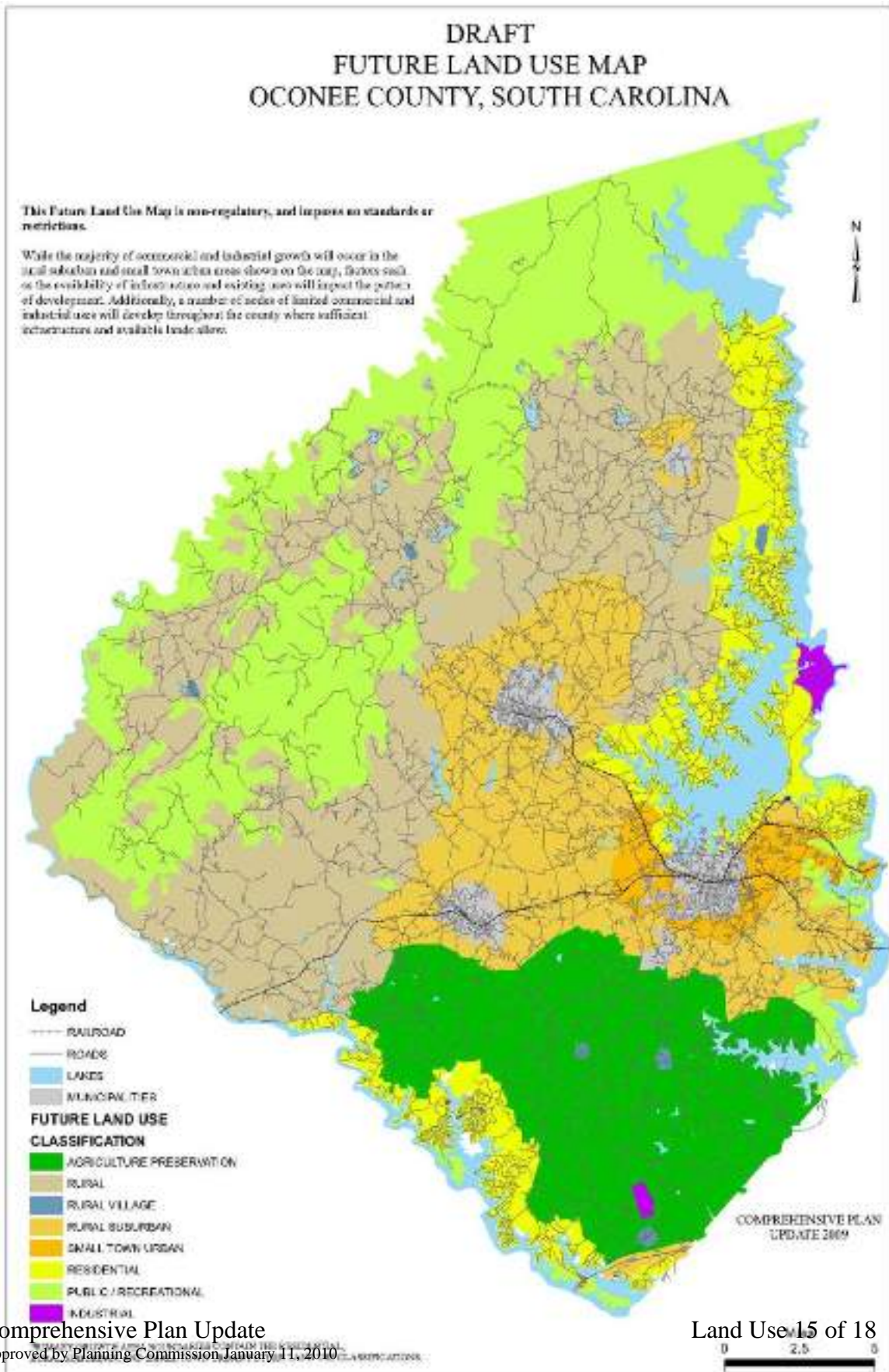
1. **Agricultural Preservation** identifies those areas deemed to be prime or special agriculture lands, and is therefore vital to the continuation of agricultural enterprise in Oconee County. Because agriculture-related activities typically impact in some manner most aspects of life within such areas, uses should be limited to those that are compatible with ongoing agricultural activity, and can coexist with the secondary effects commonly associated with it. Dense residential and commercial uses should not be permitted, and infrastructure located and managed so as to minimize undesired development.
2. **Rural** identifies those areas characterized by a continuing rural lifestyle and open lands. This area, as a whole, is sparsely populated with little or no infrastructure, but may contain pockets of commercial uses and mixed use villages that serve as hubs of activity in the area. Although not identified as a preservation area, the impacts of new uses should be limited, and not threaten those existing. Dense residential and commercial uses should not be permitted, and infrastructure located and managed so as to retain the overall rural nature of the area.
3. **Rural Village** identifies those rural mixed use areas that commonly form the hub of a community. Typically, rural villages are located at the intersection of two or more main routes, and have an existing mix of residential and commercial uses that play a key role in the character of the surrounding area. New uses should be compatible with existing in terms of kind and density, avoiding excessive traffic, noise, and other secondary impacts.
4. **Rural Suburban** identifies those areas that have undergone conversion from rural lands to a mix of uses, but is still predominantly characterized by a rural landscape. Infrastructure sufficient to support additional development is reasonably accessible, and pockets of significant development exist throughout. Such areas are suited for additional clusters of relatively dense development, but new uses should be compatible with those existing, and limited in the impact on the overall rural character of the area. In the event such areas are adjacent to other jurisdictions, all new uses shall be compatible with any adopted land use plans.
5. **Small Town Urban** identifies those areas of the densest development. The area is well served by infrastructure, and is suitable for continued development. While new uses may vary in nature and intensity, they should be compatible with a 'small town' atmosphere, and not negative impact those existing. In the event

such areas are adjacent to other jurisdictions, all new uses shall be compatible with any adopted land use plans.

6. **Residential** are those areas deemed to be appropriate for development primarily focused on residential uses. Such areas may or may not contain significant clusters of existing residential developments, as well as pockets of agriculture, rural, commercial, and other land uses. Although new uses may vary, they should not detract from the overall residential character of area, and not impose negative secondary impacts on nearby properties.
7. **Public / Recreation** are those lands primarily reserved for recreational use, and as such are reasonably open to the public.
8. **Industrial** are those areas specifically reserved for existing or planned industrial or commercial uses. It should be stressed that this in no way imposes a limitation on the location of such uses in other categories, where appropriate.

DRAFT

Figure LU-2



Analysis

The way we choose to utilize our land impacts our lives far beyond simply determining what is built on it. Regardless of the amount of investment in a facility or infrastructure, any benefits derived can be partially or wholly negated by activity nearby. Precious natural or cultural resources, impossible to replace, can be taken from us by the careless act of a neighbor. Even the cost of purchasing and maintaining a home is directly affected by the way surrounding properties are developed and maintained. Without a doubt, land use issues are some of the most critical, as well as potentially controversial- if not unpleasant- that a community must deal with. But for the people of any county to have a say in what their area will become, such issues must be addressed, and they must be addressed before the pressures of development erase the very attributes most cherished. Given the likelihood that Oconee County is facing tremendous growth in the very near future, we have no time to delay.

There are many potential benefits associated with growth and development, provided it occurs in a manner that does not create negative impacts that outweigh the positives. In fact, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for a community to find sustainable prosperity without growth bringing in new wealth. Without such wealth, given the costs of maintaining existing facilities and infrastructure tend to increase over time, stasis leads to decline. At the same time, however, unmanaged growth is just as costly, for without thought given to where and how, as well as how much additional growth can best be accommodated, the community will be burdened with the cost of providing new facilities, infrastructure, and services that could have been avoided. Additionally, left totally to the whims of the free market, those areas most special to a community do not receive due consideration, for so often their true value is not monetary. Based on the recent planning efforts in Oconee County discussed in this element, it is obvious that there seems to be a growing awareness of these facts among a wide cross-section of county residents. And though there has not been a consensus reached on all of the measures needed to achieve it, there is no doubt that the vast majority of citizens share the desire for a prosperous future in a predominantly rural area, surrounded by the array of natural resources that have always made Oconee County unique. Therefore, in the very near future, we must become more proactive in our efforts to identify and create those tools necessary to insure that we do retain our identity.

Although no two communities develop and evolve in exactly the same manner and at the same pace, over time most communities find themselves forced to deal with those same type of issues having been dealt with elsewhere. This can be seen in Oconee County today, for we are increasingly being faced with similar development pressures felt years earlier in some neighboring counties. And because we have to develop our response using basically the same tools available elsewhere, our solutions will probably be similar to those utilized by others. That is not to say, however, that we need to borrow anything wholesale, for Oconee County's evolution is being affected by forces not experienced by most other counties, but we need to keep in mind that we can learn from the successes, as well as mistakes, of many of our neighbors. Therefore, as was the case in the development and adoption of our Zoning Enabling Ordinance, as we look to develop other strategies needed to manage future growth, it will be worth the time and effort necessary to weigh all proposals in terms of their potential for addressing the particular needs of Oconee County, against the possible impositions on current residents.

It is no secret that the ability of a property owner to use their land as they wish has been a cherished ideal throughout Oconee County's history. In fact, this and similar issues are often discussed- and sometimes loudly debated- in various forums throughout the county on a regular basis. In the past, when the population density was much lower, and when the variety of land use throughout most of the unincorporated areas of the county was in one way or another centered on agriculture, the chances of significant instances of incompatibility of use were limited. Today, however, things have changed, for we as a community do not live as we used to. Already, thousands of acres previously devoted to farming or timbering are covered with homes; rural lanes are increasingly being widened to accommodate the traffic of busy commercial centers, a process that itself spurs additional development; and remote, forested hillsides have become densely populated lakeshore communities. Simply put, Oconee County's land is being utilized in ways never anticipated only a few years ago by a population more numerous and more diverse than was ever thought possible by previous generations. Still, for those born here, as well as many of those that move here to escape the grasp of urban areas, a high value is placed on Oconee County's traditionally rural character, with farming at the heart of it. But without standards designed to promote and sustain this rural character, it will soon disappear. Therefore, in addition to identifying those areas in which we wish to have devoted to agriculture, we have to develop the mix of tools necessary to insure its survival. And while some of these will likely include inducements such as conservation easements, if we are serious in our claim to desire the survival of agriculture as a significant presence in Oconee County, in spite of the fact that it may run counter to the ideals of our forefathers, carefully targeted regulatory measures must have a place in the mix. Otherwise, Oconee County will fast convert into just another urban landscape.

Oconee County will always be subject to the impact of forces beyond its control. And though there is no way to stop all of the negative aspects of some changes, and certainly no way to regain what has already been lost as a result of them, the people of Oconee County now have the opportunity to make key choices that will help insure that future changes are, if not entirely desirable, at least relatively benign- if, that is, people take part. As never before, citizens have begun speaking up in various forums, whether at Planning Commission meetings in favor or against a particular standard or ordinance, or as part of a visioning session or stakeholder's meeting. And though the paths toward the end result may vary, and at times even conflict, the overwhelming majority of citizens consistently express the same goals: a sustainable prosperity, protection of our natural resources, and the continuation of a rural way of life. To that end, Oconee County has already embarked on a course that includes balancing recruitment of high-tech industry with increased tourism as a major components of this prosperity; taking an active role in the conservation of significant lands, with the possibility of other such efforts in the future; and the adoption of a number of land use regulations intended to help guide future development. These steps, although admittedly seen by some to be relatively small ones, are significant, for it signals that Oconee County has begun to look to the future, with its eyes on, at the very least, a sketch of what it wishes to be. And though the vision needs to be clarified as we move ahead, there is little doubt that we, as continues to be stated time after time, in one manner or another, know the direction we wish to head.

Land Use Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Land Use Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Initiate efforts to develop the foundation of a county stormwater management program prior to federal mandates, thereby allowing for the most efficient and cost-effective implementation possible in the event of designation.
2. Establish a program of managing both water quantity and water quality throughout the county that will ensure efficient utilization, and appropriate conservation, of our greatest natural resource.
3. Preserve, protect and enhance Oconee County's environmentally sensitive lands, unique scenic views, agrarian landscapes, and topographic features.
4. Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands and scenic areas under pressure.
5. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
6. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
7. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Continue to closely monitor Oconee County's compliance with state and federal air-quality standards, adopting and maintaining reduction strategies as necessary.
11. Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.



Transportation Element

Overview

This element focuses on Oconee County's transportation system, a major factor in our prosperity and way of life. The system's make up of roads, airports, railroads, mass transit routes, bicycle routes, and pedestrian routes, and is owned and maintained by a mix of public and private entities. This examination will include a discussion of existing conditions, as well as goals and various implementation strategies designed to attain them.

Natural Limitations

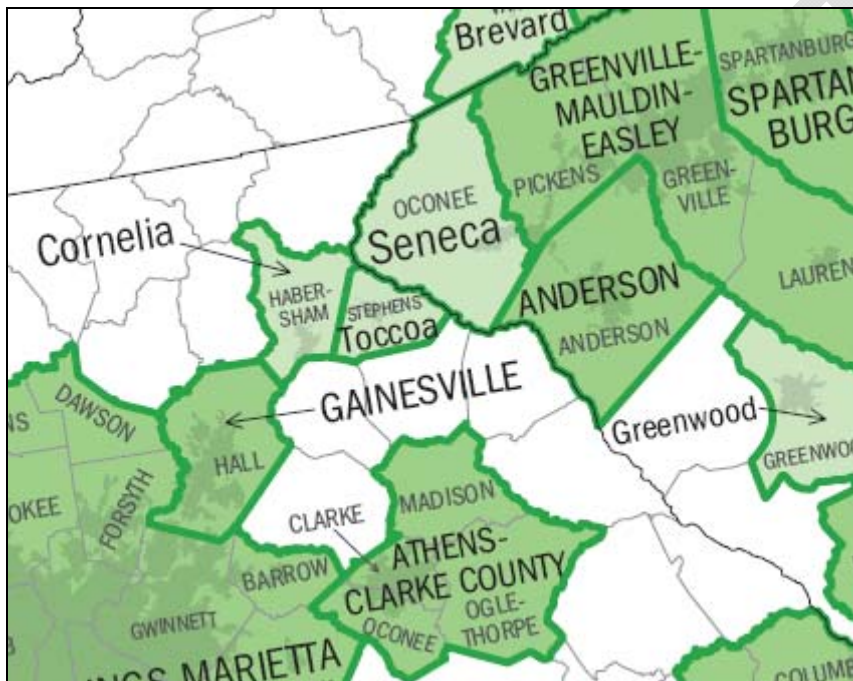
Oconee County's location at the edge of the mountains has played a major role in the history of transportation in the county, for the ridges and valleys that serve as a beautiful backdrop to the natural features that attract so many of today's visitors have always also acted as an impediment to easy travel. Even today, it is possible to see the remains of portions of many of those paths and wagon roads, winding through the hills and along the ridges, establishing the routes that much of our modern transportation system continues to follow. Therefore, in spite of the development of safe modern routes throughout the county, the geography and topography of Oconee County continues to have a major impact on travel through our area. Even the rail system that bisects the county, a part of a major route connecting the northeastern United States to the South, skirts along the base of the Blue Ridge, following roughly the same course as the major road routes. With this in mind, as we consider the status of our transportation system, there is no escaping the fact that, as important as travel is to our modern lives, there are practical limits imposed by the our surroundings. So, unlike some of our neighboring counties, our transportation goals must be tempered by the knowledge that nature itself, which has blessed us in so many ways, has imposed additional hurdles that many times make the simplest solution, in the end, less than satisfactory. Oconee County must plan carefully.

Changes

Although the coming of the automobile and modern roads sometimes resulted in dramatic changes in other regions, they had only limited impact on life in Oconee County. Transportation of goods and travel became much easier and more convenient, enabling some people to take advantage of increased opportunities for economic gain, and spurring the growth of commercial activity near the towns; but in the larger scheme, the impacts of these changes were limited, and Oconee remained the predominantly rural area it had been since its beginning. Even after the area was linked with the rest of the nation through the Interstate

Highway System, travel to major urban areas required a significant effort. Therefore, while many Oconee County residents regularly visited the Atlanta or Charlotte, very few worked there or otherwise commuted on a daily basis. The distance was simply too great. In the last couple of decades, however, signs of change have begun to appear, for the boundaries of the major southeastern urban areas have rapidly ballooned outward, coming increasingly closer to Oconee County, and resulting in an ongoing urbanization of portions of the county. Because of this growth, the U.S. Census Bureau recently declared Oconee County to be a micropolitan area, which means the county contains an urban cluster of at least 10,000 people. See Figure T-1 (below).

Figure T-1



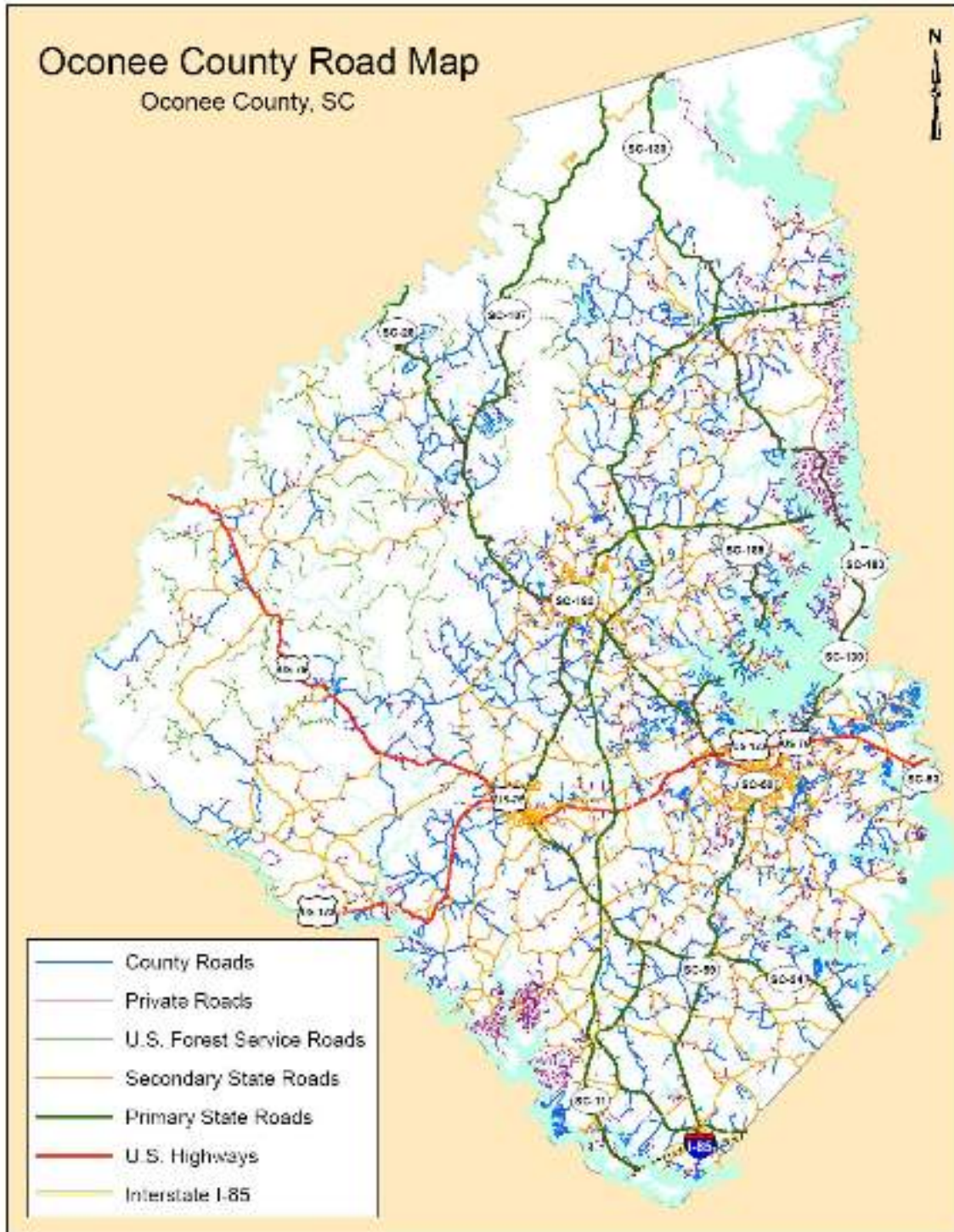
Source: US Census Bureau, "Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas of the United States and Puerto Rico November 2007".

Figure T-1 shows the Oconee County, along with its neighboring Georgia counties of Stephens and Habersham, as one of the links between the Atlanta Metro Area and the Greenville-Spartanburg Metro Area, which is itself linked to the Charlotte metropolitan region by the micropolitan South Carolina counties of Cherokee and Union. As the metro areas continue to expand and move closer, traffic on existing transportation arteries will continue to grow. Today, barring traffic slowdowns, an Oconee County resident living near Interstate 85 can commute to work in the Atlanta metro area in approximately 45 minutes, which is approximately the same amount of time typically needed to commute to work from western Oconee County to the City of Anderson, where many Oconeeans have traditionally found work through the years.

Road Network

Figure T-2 (below) shows all federal, state, county and private roads in Oconee County.

Figure T- 2



State and Federal Highways

According to the Oconee County Geographic Information System (GIS), Oconee County is served by approximately 2370 miles of roads, with 1060 miles comprised of state and federal roads. Those maintained by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) include 8.6 miles of Interstate 85; 50 miles of U.S. highways; 188 miles of primary state routes; and 657 miles of secondary state routes. Also, the U.S. Forest Service maintains 156 miles of roads in the Sumter National Forest. See Figure T-3 below.

Traffic Counts

Figure T-3 (below) illustrates the level of traffic recorded on the state maintained roads in Oconee County in 2008. The traffic counts, which are based on average daily trips as documented over time, are a good tool to show not only which state roads receive the most usage, and therefore likely to required the most maintenance and upgrades, but also which areas of the county may have county maintained roads that will require attention.

Figure T-3

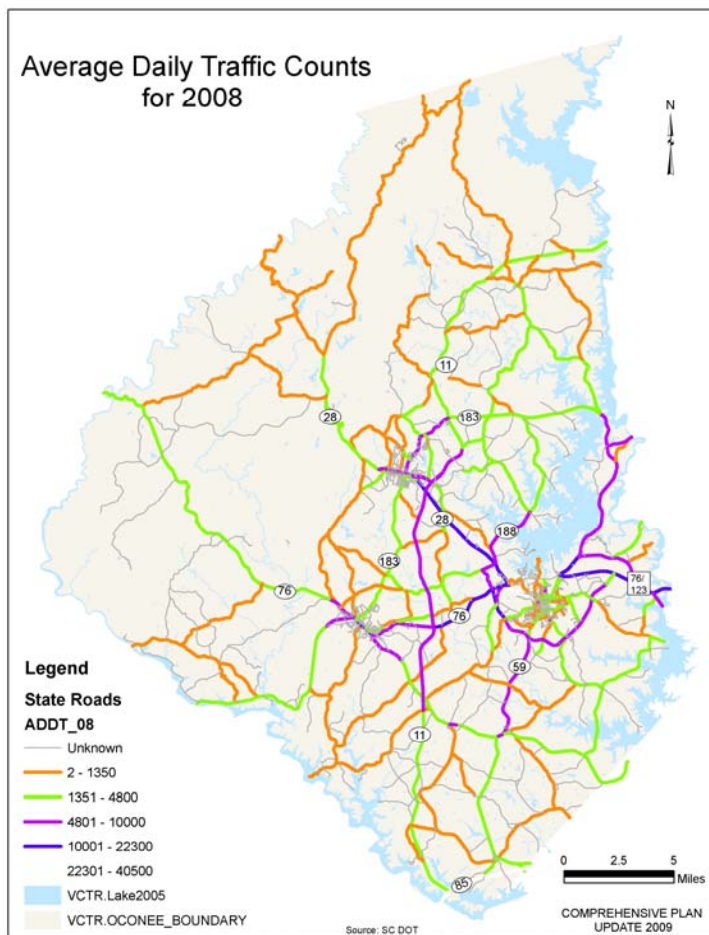


Figure T-3 clearly shows that Interstate 85 had in excess of 40,000 Average Daily Trips (ADT's). As for other major routes, U.S. 76/123, and S.C. 28 are the busiest routes in the county, with up to 22,300 Average Daily Trips (ADT's) in some areas. Next are portions of S.C. 130, S.C. 183, S.C. 11, S.C. 59, S.C. 188, Wells Highway, and short segments of other roads, with up to 10,000 ADT's.

County Roads

Oconee County currently maintains almost 660 miles of roads, with approximately 1/3 of them remaining unpaved. Overall, the county road system provides safe, relatively efficient routes that serve county residents well with a mix of road types, including:

Collector roads- those that typically exceed 800 Average Daily Trips (ADT's) and have the primary purpose of intersecting traffic from intersecting local roads and handling movements to the nearest arterial road. A secondary function is to provide direct access to abutting properties. Collector roads also connect local access roads to the highway systems major and high-speed arterial roads. The collector road provides both land access service and traffic service within residential subdivisions.

Local road (major)- those for which the typical number of ADT's range from 401 to 800, and contain two or more access points. The primary purpose is to provide access to abutting properties, and receiving traffic from minor local roads.

Local road (minor) - those roads for which the typical number of ADT's range from 0 to 400, and have the primary purpose of providing access to abutting properties. This road normally terminates in a cul-de-sac, loop, or other turnaround, with no more than two access points.

It should be noted that, although county road standards recognize arterial roads, which is defined as a major road that collects and distributes traffic to and from minor arterials and collector streets, there are currently no true arterials in the inventory.

Condition of Roads

Many older roads in the county inventory never designed or built as the result of any formal planning effort. The roads evolved from the paths and trails used by our ancestors on foot or horseback; over the years they were widened, straightened, leveled, and better constructed perhaps, but mostly following along the same ridgelines, and crossing streams at the same spots that have served for centuries. In some cases there is a complete lack of documentation as to how these roads came to be 'county roads', for as in most rural areas, necessity often outweighs formality. Therefore, we have to assume that for many of our roads, a county leader decided to start maintaining this route or another for the benefit of the public, particularly as it allowed for easier transport of farm goods to market. Understandably, little thought was given to the need to plan for future upgrades that would accommodate the vehicles of our era, leaving later generations to deal with needed changes.

Many newer roads accepted into the county road system, particularly those taken since the 1970's, differ from many of the old routes. These roads designed and built to serve only a particular development required more engineering and serve fewer residents. Lack of an overall road design and changing construction standards resulted in a wide range of conditions existing in the road inventory today. During the last two decades, significant energy has been put forth toward achieving consistency in road standards. Among the most notable efforts has been the development of modern county road standards that today, by and large, not only match those of most other counties in the region, but also conform to those established by the South Carolina Department of Transportation. The current version of these standards was adopted in 2008 in the Oconee County Unified Road Standards Ordinance.

There is no doubt that the development of modern road standards has resulted in an overall improvement in the quality of the county road system, making them not only more cost-efficient, but also safer for the public. Therefore, roads accepted into the county road system recent years are considered to be with few exceptions well-built, safe, and relatively easy to maintain. Many older roads, however, are of lesser quality, with some considered marginal, at best. Therefore, one of the major tasks facing Oconee County is to develop a method of creating a comprehensive road maintenance and upgrade program. Currently, Oconee County is implementing a systematic approach to evaluating and prioritizing roads for maintenance activities, with safety being of the greatest concern. But the identification of those roads is only one component to improving the system, for there remain impediments to creating a comprehensive program.

In past years, the amount of funding dedicated to road improvements has varied, with the last several decreasing from \$2,124,721 in 2006; \$1,334,258 in 2007; to \$158,577 in 2008. As a result, many roads identified as needing upgrades did not receive funding. It should be stressed; however, that while Oconee County is no different from many other jurisdictions facing tough economic decisions at budget times. But without a method of funding road maintenance and upgrade activities in a systematic manner, there is little likelihood that the needed work will be accomplished within the foreseeable future, and even less chance of the development of a long-term plan that can effectively enable staff to seek cost-saving methods of approaching the program.

Another major hurdle associated with upgrading the road inventory is the lack of deeded road right-of-way, for in years past; many county roads were taken into the system without any. As a result, a number of roads are maintained with only prescriptive right-of-way, enabling only 'ditch-to-ditch' repairs; no upgrade of work can be performed outside of the existing boundaries of the road, prohibiting any widening that may be needed as a result of increased traffic. Efforts to obtain the necessary right-of-way have in many cases proven to be problematic, for County policy to date has been to attempt to obtain right-of-way by donation only. Some projects have been delayed for years, and in some cases, indefinitely, by the refusal of a property owner to provide the necessary right-of-way. As a result, in spite of utilizing an evaluation and prioritization system, it is not possible to develop a truly systematic maintenance program that addresses the maintenance issues of all county roads on a need basis. Given the anticipated growth and development that will surely impose greater traffic volume on at least some of these roads, it is imperative that the County's road maintenance program include the use of all

reasonable avenues available to it in obtaining right-of-way, including the consideration of implementing, at least on those roads deemed most critical, imminent domain.

Long Term

A long-term goal would be to establish road maintenance and upgrade system that is based on a wide array of variables, and operates in a smooth and systematic manner. One of the most common standards for measuring the ability of a road system to support existing and anticipated traffic across the nation is the Level of Service (LOS) system, which assigns roads grades A to F, with A being the best, and F the worst. The system allows a local jurisdiction to review each road in terms of travel speed, time required for travel between points, freedom to maneuver between lanes, slowdowns and interruptions from traffic, travel comfort and convenience. This provides an assessment of the overall condition of the road system, and highlights those roads most inadequate. Also, the LOS system provides a community with a simple method of establishing a minimum level of acceptability for roads. Given that few jurisdictions have the resources to maintain many of their roads in an ‘A’ condition, for, as with any other capital item, economic limitations necessitate that need determine the priority of those items demanding attention. Therefore, Oconee County would need to decide at what level below the top LOS is acceptable and what is unacceptable. County officials need to keep in mind that there is a balance with the cost of maintenance and potential liabilities resulting from safety concerns. Therefore, many communities adopt a policy of prioritizing upgrades based on LOS, with the goal of allowing no road to fall below a particular grade.

The LOS grading system is outline can be found in Table T-1 (below):

Table T-1

Level of Service (LOS) Characteristics	
Grade	Conditions
A	Traffic flows at or above the posted speed limit, with lane changes unrestricted; overall, travel is comfortable and convenient
B	Slight congestion with maneuverability somewhat restricted; all lanes occasionally occupied, but speed not reduced.
C	Traffic level often limits ability to pass or change lanes, but volume remains within design capacity; conditions are typically safe for travel at posted speed limits. LOS C is often the target for highways.
D	Traffic volume sufficient to slow travel speed somewhat, with all lanes often occupied, but conditions remain typically safe. Given the cost of upgrading and/or adding roads versus the benefits gained, LOS D is often considered adequate for roads during peak hours.
E	Traffic flow is irregular, with speeds consistently slowed below posted limits; volume is approaching design limits. LOS E is often considered acceptable in larger, densely populated urban areas.
F	Traffic flow is typically slowed or stopped due to volume, with travel seldom accomplished at posted speeds; traffic jams common. Level of demand on LOS F roads is beyond design capacity.

It should be remembered that LOS is intended to describe the average or typical condition, and is not impacted by conditions at any given moment. Therefore, a road graded LOS A is subject to temporary closure due to an accident or road work without being reduced; permanent changes in traffic volume from new development or rerouting, however, can result in a reduction.

Private Roads

Approximately 625 miles of privately maintained roads are located throughout Oconee County. Although most of these are primarily driveways and drives that access private neighborhoods, some are utilized as access to amenities open to the public. Few, if any, however, are considered public thoroughfares. Among the major developments that maintain their own road system are Chickasaw Point, Keowee Key, and The Cliffs.

As with the County road inventory, private roads vary tremendously in condition across the county, with some providing excellent service, and others contain navigational impediments. Currently, there is no system either in place or under consideration for accomplishing upgrades needed to mitigate the deficiencies. In 2008, however, Oconee County adopted standards for new private roads. The following outlines the three classifications of private roads established in the standards, and highlights some of the requirements (see the Unified Road Standards for the Unincorporated Areas of Oconee County for more information):

- ❖ **Private Driveways** (serves 0-3 residential dwellings)- No design standards, but must meet all applicable building and fire codes
- ❖ **Private Drive** (serves 4-10 residential dwellings)- Driving surface 20' wide, with 50' of right-of-way; appropriate signage, sight distance, and other basic requirements; meet all applicable building and fire codes
- ❖ **Private Roads** (serves 11 or more residential dwellings)- Meet most standards applicable for public roads of a similar nature

Perhaps the greatest concern related to private roads, at least from the County's perspective, is balancing the wishes of the private property owners with the need to maintain accessibility for emergency services. One of local governments primary functions is to provide a minimum level (whatever that is determined to be) of response to calls for emergency assistance. Typically, for sparsely populated rural jurisdictions, this level is relatively low, if for no other reason than the tax base is often too small to support a robust emergency response system. For larger communities, however, the level of response generally increases, as a result of the enhance revenue sources, and the greater level emergency service expected by urban populations. Therefore, as Oconee County grows and develops, it should be expected that the population will demand greater levels of emergency services. To be able to provide this service equitably, however, there needs to be a minimum level of access for responders, both to benefit those requesting the assistance, and to insure the safety of emergency personnel. While the recent adoption of private road standards insures that future routes will be adequate, there needs to be a determination as to what will be the minimum level of access necessary, and by what method the standard will be achieved.

Mass Transit

Existing Conditions

The Division of Mass Transit of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) coordinates public transportation services throughout the state. This agency's duties extend to oversight of the distribution of all state and federal mass transit funds, the development and implementation of regional transit plans, and monitoring of grants. Although public transit has traditionally been limited primarily to urban areas in South Carolina, in recent years there has been a growing interest in expanding service even to some rural areas. Although the term 'mass transit' typically brings a city bus system to mind, it actually encompasses a variety of providers offering a range of services. These services include not only municipal transit systems, but also more specialized services; from the typical fixed route system providing the general public transportation to employment, shopping, or other daily activities, and public transit is an increasingly important component in our region's transportation system. The Council of Aging also offers door-to-door services in some circumstances.

Currently, the only mass transit system serving the public in Oconee County is the Clemson Area Transit System (CAT), which provides free bus service in and around the City of Seneca, and along U.S. 76/123 between Seneca and Clemson. Though the service in Oconee County is only several years old, ridership statistics indicate that it has already become an important fixture in the Seneca area. The success in Seneca has given rise to consideration of expanding the 'CAT Bus' system to the cities of Westminster and Walhalla, with a feasibility study conducted in 2008. There has also been some discussion of the possibility of the development of a smaller van service, less expensive to establish and operate, but linking with the CAT system, thereby accomplishing the same goal. Either way, an expansion would not only provide public transportation services linking the major population centers of Oconee County, but would also link Oconee County's largest towns with the other towns served by CAT. Currently the issue is still under consideration, but given Oconee County's projected growth and urbanization, mass transit is likely to become a major component in our future transportation system.

Future Needs

Unlike past years, particularly in rural areas such as Oconee, the only solution to crowded roads was to upgrade existing roads or build new ones. Today, the focus is shifting to a more efficient use of existing routes; in short, moving more people in fewer vehicles. Not only does this avoid the increasing cost of road construction, but it also preserves existing landscapes from a sea of pavement. It should be noted, that Oconee County's decision to develop our tourism industry as a major component of our economy, which is focused on our natural and cultural resources, necessitates careful consideration of road projects. While an adequate road system is vital for any community's health and economic wellbeing, the negative impacts of a four-lane road on an area's scenic attributes and lifestyle are not easily shown on a spreadsheet. As a result, the costs of establishing a public transportation system may appear on the surface to be greater than simply adding some lanes to a road. However, the impact on the scenic character and

'small town' feel of an area may actually cost more, over time, through lost tourism revenues.

Another important aspect worthy of consideration regarding mass transit in Oconee County lies in changing attitudes toward public transportation among citizens. Like the citizens of many other rural areas, Oconee County residents have traditionally harbored an attitude that praised independent action and providing for oneself; combined with this, of course, is the American love of the automobile, which enables a person to come and go at will. Historical attitudes have also perceived mass transit as a 'city thing', or, for many, something for those that could not provide for themselves. Regardless of the reasoning, many in rural areas view mass transit in a negative light. As a result, an effort to develop mass transit for the public never took root until the last decade, when a number of changes have resulted in a change in this attitude.

One of the major changes was a direct result of the county's growth in population from in-migration from other areas. It is an often stated belief among some in Oconee County that 'non-natives' are almost exclusively made up of 'northerners', with ideals and visions contrary to those born here, such as a quicker acceptance of the idea of mass transit. The truth is, however, that geography itself plays little role in that belief; instead, it is more the fact that they hail from urbanized areas, whether north or south, where mass transit is an accepted and necessary part of life. Added to this, of course, is the impact of a couple of generations of Oconee natives that have now grown up with the influence of mass media in their homes. Today, music, clothing, and even manners of speech are becoming homogenized with the rest of the nation, bringing attitudes closer in line with our counterparts in other regions. Oconee County's population is now made up by a large group of citizens that have in the past utilized some form of mass transit on a regular basis; it is no longer seen as foreign concept.

Another force driving a reevaluation of the need for mass transit in Oconee County is the age of our population, ranked among the oldest in the state. This means that, more than many other parts of the state, a significant portion of county citizens will soon be reaching a point in life when driving an automobile is potentially problematic. At the same time, we possess a road system that was in large part not designed to be 'walkable', even in those areas where major pockets of elderly live close enough to be able to walk to services. Nevertheless, the fact that there are a number of lake communities, made up in large part of retirees, located far from any town or commercial area, leaving the residents with few options other than to travel relatively long distances just to purchase groceries, visit a doctor, or attend church. As a result, there is a growing realization that a public transportation system of some nature that extends far beyond the borders of the municipalities may become a necessity in the not too distant future.

Finally, this change in attitude has come to the fore because of an increase in the mobility of our society. There is increasing congestion and it is costing more to get there. Our parent's generation, regardless of location, lived a much more sedentary life than we do. Long trips were only made for special reasons. To even begin analyzing the reasons for this change would take up far more space than serves our purpose at present, for there are not only social and cultural issues at play, but also the influences of technology and economics, as well as possible others. Suffice it to say, we are living in a time of the rapid growth and development of a very mobile society in Oconee County. Many believe that recent economic changes will quite likely diminish the traditional desire, if not

ability, for many people to purchase and maintain an automobile; and this at a time when advances in areas such as connectivity and communication are fast removing many impediments and inconveniences of travel, which will likely spur even greater mobility. As a result, Oconee County's transportation system, focused almost exclusively on transporting people in private automobiles, is limited in sustainability. Therefore, it is vital to begin viewing mass transit as a part of Oconee County's future transportation system, with efforts to collaborate with the appropriate entities in establishing the foundations of such a system undertaken in the near future.

Air

Existing Conditions

Oconee County residents are fortunate to be located within a relatively short distance from a number of airports, offering a number of air travel choices. First, the Oconee County Regional Airport is a general aviation airport that has become a vital component in the county's economic development, which a number of businesses utilize the airport to conveniently visit local facilities. Also, because it is only approximately a 5-minute drive from the Clemson University campus, it is often used by the school for various travel purposes, and hosts the school's aircraft. Additionally, the proximity of the airport to university athletic facilities makes it very popular with fans that like to fly in to attend sporting events. Over the years, a number of upgrades have been made to the facility, with the latest major effort an ongoing expansion of the runway from the current length of 4,400 feet to 5,000 feet, which will allow it to accommodate larger business jets.

Oconee County Regional Airport Terminal



Other small airports located close to Oconee County include the Anderson Regional Airport, which is located off S.C. Highway 24, 3 miles west of the City of Anderson, South Carolina. This airport has 2 runways, one just over 6,000 feet long, and the second slightly less than 5,000 feet. Pickens County also has an airport located in Liberty, South Carolina, which offers a single runway slightly over 5,000 feet long.

The Oconee County region services several major airports. The Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport (GSP), located near Interstate 85 in Greer, South Carolina, about an hour's drive from Oconee, offers both passenger and air cargo services, with dozens of non-stop daily departures linking our region to cities throughout the United States. The facility hosts 16 airlines that annually serve more than 1.5 million passengers, and transport more than 25,000 tons of air cargo. The runway is slightly longer than 11,000 feet, which enables it to accommodate all sizes of aircraft currently operating.

Only about 2 hours away, the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) is located south of the City of Atlanta, Georgia, near both Interstate 75 and Interstate 85. The Atlanta International Airport is said to be the busiest airport in the world. Over 30 airlines and 18 cargo carriers operate out of the facility. In 2008, the airport served over 90 million passengers, and transported over 650,000 tons of air cargo. The airport has 5 runways, with the longest measuring 11,899 feet. Also approximately 2 hours from Oconee County is the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport (CLT), which is located just above the state line in Charlotte, North Carolina near Interstate 85. The airport offers passenger services from 17 airlines, and cargo transport from 20 carriers and in 2008 served almost 35 million passengers, and transported over 132,000 tons of air cargo.

Future Needs

The Oconee County Airport, already important to the area's economic wellbeing, positioned to become an even greater asset. As it sits near U.S. 123 in one of the fastest growing areas of the county, the facility offers easy access to destinations throughout the primary development areas of the county (and areas adjacent), for both business and private customers. Also, its existing linkage with Clemson University provides a foundation for the development of even great partnership, particularly as the school expands its position as one of the premier research institutions in the nation. Therefore, the facility should be seen as much more than an element of our transportation capabilities, for, with the proper vision and support, it can not only expand to serve businesses more efficiently, but also become an integral component of the university's efforts. However, this effort will require expanding the relationship between Oconee County and the university, as well as seeking out partnerships with private entities to enhance the facility.

Rail

Existing Conditions

Although rail service played a major role in Oconee County's growth and development, it has declined significantly in recent decades. Currently, there are no operating passenger stations or points of access within Oconee County. There is, however, the Clemson station, located just east of the county in the City of Clemson, and the Toccoa, Georgia, station a few miles to the west, providing local residents access to the Amtrak Crescent Route that runs between New York and New Orleans. As the current schedule includes 2 stops in Clemson each day (early morning and late night), and only special requested stops in Toccoa, the stations are only open part time to accommodate arrivals and departures, and do not operate a ticket office or provide baggage assistance.

Most of the rail traffic moving through Oconee County transports freight. With the main rail line that parallels U.S. 123 serving as a major artery for Norfolk Southern between Charlotte and Atlanta, many thousands of tons of freight pass through Oconee County on a daily basis. Few local businesses, however, rely on transporting freight directly to and from their facilities by rail. Most businesses have turned to truck transport, leaving a number of miles of secondary 'spur' rail lines seldom used.

We are currently awaiting updates on the planned creation of high speed rail route that would pass through Oconee County. Plans are currently being developed for extending the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor from Charlotte, N.C. to Macon, Georgia. Based on information available, this extension would result in our area being served by high speed rail. A study of options for expanding the service, prepared by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, identified the proposed route as including the existing train stations in Clemson, S.C., and Toccoa,

Ga. Of course it remains to be seen if either or both will be actual stops, but the document indicates that the Clemson station is receiving serious consideration. If Clemson does become a stop, with the trains expected to travel between 125 and 150 miles per hour, both metro Atlanta and Charlotte would be within only a few minutes travel time. Also, because it is now possible to be connected to the workplace throughout the trip, travel time on the train can be productive, meaning that it would be no great burden to live in our region, and work in the urban area. Of course, no final plans have emerged at this time, but given the availability of ‘stimulus’ funding for the project being provided by the federal government, the chances are very good that the project will come to fruition.

Future Needs

Although the level of utilization of rail transportation has declined significantly in the last few decades, most of the rail routes remain, allowing for the possibility of future expansion. And because these routes connect 4 of the 5 municipalities in the county, thereby providing a link between the more densely populated sections, the potential exists for the establishment of some form of light rail service. Currently, such a system is impractical, but given the amount of growth projected for Oconee County in the coming decades, it is possible that some type of rail system may become a more attractive option.

For now, the major rail-related topic is the possibility of high speed rail service becoming available in our area in the next few years. Although much of the impetus for the expansion into our area is beyond the local level, Oconee County should be proactive in encouraging its development. Our leaders and staff should prioritize any opportunities for taking part in the process. Of course, in spite of the benefits that would undoubtedly stem from it, we need to be cognizant of the potential for some unwanted impacts. Therefore, it is incumbent on those involved on our behalf, at every level, to carefully review all aspects of proposals within their purview, and seek out the best options for Oconee County.

Pedestrian and Bicycle



Oconee County's natural beauty distinguishes it above other areas and conversely, this beauty causes countless residents and visitors to abandon vehicle travel and strike out either on foot or bicycle. The focus of activity, however, has been focusing almost exclusively on other forms of recreation. We have over 75 miles of maintained trails in the county, and a number of sections of bicycle lanes on state-maintained highways, little of this is intended to facilitate travel between home and work, shopping, or other destinations that most people consider normal parts of their day-to-day life. While an increasing number of people view this imbalance to be problematic, it is important to remember that Oconee County is not alone for the development of America's transportation system focus has been almost exclusively on development of facilities for motorized vehicles. As a result, pedestrian and bicycle transport have been widely viewed as being 'old-fashioned' modes of travel; and, as is the case in other predominantly rural parts of the country, where residences are often separated from destinations farther than can be quickly traveled on foot or by bicycle, non-motorized transportation has traditionally received little consideration. Recently, however, this attitude has begun to change.

To start with, economics have led some people to look for alternatives to the automobile as the price of vehicles and fuel is quickly becoming a significant financial burden. Citizens are increasingly becoming aware of the effects of pollutants emitted from automobiles on the environment, with the acceptance of the need to prioritize 'green' ideals having come to the fore in the last decade. As the population increases, people and with development prices soaring there has been a turn toward living in communities similar to those that evolved prior to the development of the automobile.

Instead of seeking sprawled-out developments, with the various uses separated into pockets, requiring most people to have access to motor vehicle travel, 'traditional neighborhood' development is increasing. Traditional neighborhood development occurs in communities with mixed uses, with residences, businesses, and stores appropriated situated near each other, allowing residents to carry on most day-to-day activities with having to resort to an automobile. Recognizing this shift, a number of governmental entities, including the State of South Carolina, have begun to adjust their focus to start prioritizing alternative forms of transportation.

On February 20, 2003, the South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission officially broadened the scope of their mission by making bicycling accommodations part of everyday operations within the state transportation system. As a result, the agency has prioritized adding bicycle lanes to appropriate stretches of new roads, as well as designing and constructing facilities as part of upgrades of existing roads. This change in attitude will now make it possible to travel safely by bicycle- or by foot- in areas previously only traversed by vehicle. Of course, this does not mean that a well laid out network of routes will exist across the state in the very near future, but, over time, it should become easier to accommodate these alternative forms of travel.

On the local level, planning new developments and communities with the existence of pedestrian and bicycle friendly routes will serve to attract the attention of developers seeking to take advantage of the growing number of people desiring to reduce the time spent in their cars. Already, the issue of designing walkable and bikeable projects in Oconee County is of growing interest for developers, with the trend expected to continue. Given the growing emphasis on physical activity and healthy lifestyles across America, projects that meet such expectations are likely to prove to be more successful than those that fail to recognize the change. As these are currently only individual efforts initiated by private entities, however, there remains a lack of connectivity between most of these and existing development. As a result, a major priority for Oconee County is to begin looking for ways to establish a network of trails and paths, situated to allow for the expansion of pedestrian and bicycle routes into areas of existing development.

This effort to expand connectivity should not be undertaken without due diligence, however, for there are problematic issues facing any community attempting to become more friendly to non-motor transport. Adding a few sidewalks or bike lanes many times changes the character of a community for the better, allowing for a reduction in vehicle traffic helps to quiet the area, encourages greater interaction of neighbors who pass on the sidewalk instead of in a car, and provides a sense of community. On the other hand, potential liabilities may overshadow, or at least limit, any derived benefits. For example, beyond basic maintenance costs, particularly in more densely developed areas along major traffic corridors, the decision to encourage people to travel in close proximity to vehicles must be couched with consideration for their safety; the least of these concerns include accommodations necessary to allow for pedestrians to cross safely from one side of the highway to the other. Typically, this means adding a crosswalk, traffic lights, and possibly establishing a speed control zone. Of course, while improving pedestrian safety, such measures will often impede the free flow of traffic. As a result, as we move forward with becoming more pedestrian friendly, it is important that we review proposed changes from a holistic viewpoint, recognizing that while the establishment of

routes designed to encourage foot traffic are increasingly popular and desirable for a number of reasons, there is an interconnection of all aspects of our transportation system. This demands that before undertaking any significant change in our focus on transportation facilities, we conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to determine where, and in what form, pedestrian routes will not only work, but will enhance the lifestyles in the greatest manner possible for the investment required to accomplish the changes.

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Transportation Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Transportation Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
2. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.
3. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
4. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
5. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
6. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
7. Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.
8. Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.
9. Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation, and to promote ecotourism opportunities.
10. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.



Priority Investment Element

Overview

Pursuant to the requirements of the South Carolina Priority Investment Act (PIA), adopted in 2007, local governments are required to include an element in their comprehensive plans that focuses on anticipated capital expenditures over the coming 10 years, prioritizing those deemed most critical. The element must also discuss potential methods of funding for the projects, considering all likely federal, state, and local sources. Additionally, the PIA mandates that the list of projects include all projected needs in public infrastructure and facilities, including water, sewer, roads, and schools, and that the list be provided to all “adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies” for their review and comment. It should be noted that other requirements established by the Act are addressed in other elements of this plan.

10-Year Capital Needs

The Planning Commission is charged with identifying a list of those capital projects in Oconee County that are anticipated to be funded with public monies in next 10 years. The list of projects is to be reviewed and considered as part of the Planning Commission’s annual recommended prioritization of projects for County Council. The source of projects to be considered on the list may be, but is not limited to, the listed needs of various County agencies on their 5-year Capital Improvement Plans (CIP), school board building programs, and other public infrastructure and facility requirements identified as critical to the citizens of Oconee County. Identified projects are listed on the “Ten-Year Capital Needs Plan for Oconee County”, which is contained in Appendix A of this document.

Funding Options

Bonds

The primary source of revenue for county capital projects are General Obligation Bonds (G.O. Bonds). G.O. Bonds are secured by the County’s projected future property tax revenue stream. It should be noted that the State of South Carolina limits the amount that local governments can borrow through G.O Bonds to 8% of the assessed value of the County’s taxable property. Although the state does allow for the approval of additional bonds by referendum in certain cases, it is not possible to anticipate the outcome of such

votes; therefore, only those funds available within the 8% limit can be considered a steady funding source.

In order to project the amount of capital funding that Oconee County may reasonably expect to be able to access through bonds in the coming decade, it is necessary to review past activity and bonding capacity. It should be emphasized that the amounts derived through this process are based on history, and although relevant for the purposes of this examination, may not necessarily indicate future conditions. Table PI-1 (below) shows the total taxable assessed values for Oconee County from 2003 to 2008. The utilization of the values recorded over a 5-year period will typically include at least one reassessment of all taxable properties in the County, thereby updating those values and improving the accuracy, and making it possible to establish reasonably reliable averages to use in projecting future funding levels into the near future.

Table PI-1

Total Taxable Assessed Value by Fiscal Year (Dollars)							
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Average Assessed Value	Average Percent Change
349,840,403	342,100,723	352,460,067	407,321,641	436,402,261	457,165,825	399,090,103.40	6%

Source: Oconee County Finance Department

It is possible to establish a projected annual increase of 6% over the next 10 years, using the average assessed value of \$399,090,103.40 shown in Table PI-1. See Table PI-2 (below).

Table PI-2

Projected Legal Debt Limit for Oconee County: 2009-2019				
Year	*Assessed Property Value (dollars)	**Debt Limit (dollars)	***Projected Outstanding Bond Balance (dollars)	Projected Legal Debt Margin
2009	421,661,449.99	33,732,916.00	8,575,000	\$25,157,916.00
2010	445,509,364.66	35,640,749.17	7,300,000	\$28,340,749.17
2011	470,706,046.30	37,656,483.70	5,965,000	\$31,691,483.70
2012	497,327,777.14	39,786,222.17	4,525,000	\$35,261,222.17
2013	525,455,153.72	42,036,412.30	3,295,000	\$38,741,412.30
2014	555,173,330.87	44,413,866.47	2,705,000	\$41,708,866.47
2015	586,572,279.54	46,925,782.36	2,080,000	\$44,845,782.36
2016	619,747,059.14	49,579,764.73	1,425,000	\$48,154,764.73

2017	654,798,105.39	52,383,848.43	730,000	\$51,653,848.43
2018	691,831,534.32	55,346,522.75	-	\$55,346,522.75
2019	730,959,463.61	58,476,757.09	-	\$58,476,757.09

Source: Oconee County Finance Department

*Projection based on average taxable assessment value 2003-2008 (see Table PI-1) with annual 6% increase

**Projected Debt Limit is equal to 8% of Assessed Property Value

***Projected values based on 2009 payment schedules

The legal debt margin for Oconee County is projected to increase in the coming decade from \$25,157,916 to \$58,476,757, because of increased assessed property values and the elimination of current bonded indebtedness, which is scheduled to occur in 2017. Naturally, any additional bonds utilized to fund capital projects in the interim would directly reduce the available amount, as would any significant decrease in assessed property values.

Other Sources

Designated Funds- Another option to provide a regular funding source for capital projects is to designate a specific portion of annual revenues as a 'set aside' for capital projects, much as Oconee County has done in the past with the reservation of one mill for economic development projects. Naturally, such a plan would only cover a limited portion of the overall capital needs of the County, but it would serve as a steady funding source for the purposes of planning for projects. One possible use for a regular set-aside could be to escrow the monies for specific multi-phased projects to be accomplished over a long period of time, or for those items that require significant upgrades on an ongoing basis. Also, for those projects that primarily serve only a limited region of the County but stimulate additional development, such as the expansion of infrastructure, it may be appropriate to designate a portion of the tax increment stemming from the new development, either to replenish the fund of designated monies, or to accomplish additional phases of the project.

Special Tax- In recent years, Oconee County has attempted to utilize a special one-cent capital infrastructure tax to assist in financing various projects. The tax, which has already been used in several other South Carolina counties, is governed by strict state guidelines that limit the applicability of funds primarily to the development and construction of a project. In brief, a 6-member commission made up of representatives from both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county creates a list of projects to be funded by the tax. The list is presented to County Council, who may either approve or reject the specified projects with no changes. If approved, the list of projects and projected costs are then part of a referendum question that must be voted on by the electorate. A majority vote supporting the tax initiates the levy, which will be in place no more than 7 years, with the tax ending sooner if actual revenues exceed the projected amount. If such an effort succeeds, the tax will be a reliable funding source for some projects; however, as with efforts to exceed the 8% assessable value limit on bond capacity by referendum, the outcome of votes cannot be reliably anticipated. Therefore, prior to the successful implementation of the one-cent capital infrastructure tax, it cannot be considered a steady funding source for future capital needs.

Grants- The use of grants become an increasingly important revenue component for many communities, with Oconee County being no different. In recent years, grants from state and

federal agencies have enabled the County to move ahead with a number of projects that would otherwise have been delayed, or possible even never realized. In spite of their value in providing needed funding, however, grants are at best of limited value for planning purposes, for the availability of funds needed for a specific project can seldom be reliably anticipated far enough in advance to allow for them to be considered a steady funding source. The competition for a limited pool of money from an ever growing number of potential applicants, combined with and the impact of the whims of economics and political moods, often results in an ever-changing amount of grant funds. Grant money, therefore, while a wonderful supplement to turn to for specific capital projects, should not be considered a major steady source of revenue.

Impact Fees- A major revenue source for funding capital projects in some South Carolina counties is development impact fees. In spite of the fact that Oconee County has not enacted impact fees to date, they continue to receive public support as an option for funding roads, parks, libraries, and other capital improvements. It should be noted, however, that the South Carolina Development Impact Fee Act imposes a number of stringent requirements on local governments seeking to develop a program. For example, prior to adoption of any impact fee for residential units, the local government must study and publish a report on the potential impacts of the fee on affordable housing within the jurisdiction. Also, the local ordinance creating the fee must specify the improvement that the money is to be used for, with the amount of the fee being based on verified costs or estimates established by detailed engineering studies. Once adopted, impact fees may be applied only for the period stated in the enacting ordinance, with all monies collected from the fee identified in a published annual report, detailing the collection, appropriation, spending of any portion. As a result, impact fees remain a viable alternative for Oconee County to consider as a funding source for future capital improvements, but the creation of a program will likely require significant assistance from an experienced consultant.

User Fees- Currently, Oconee County does not collect user fees for utilizing county-owned facilities. Although they can be considered a steady source of funding, user fees and other miscellaneous type of revenue typically generate only a portion of the amount associated with constructing and operating a facility. There are exceptions, however, for facilities such as recreation complexes many times combine these fees with concession monies, entry fees for events, and other miscellaneous revenues to achieve profitability, which can in turn be used to retire debt or upgrade a facility. Other types of facilities, however, simply do not lend themselves to the application of user fees. When appropriate, therefore, the County should consider user fees and other miscellaneous revenue as a funding source for capital projects.

Projected Needs

Currently identified Oconee County capital projects for which reasonable estimates have been developed are projected to cost \$86,421,000 over the coming decade, with several other potential projects for which reliable cost estimates have yet to be fixed receiving possible consideration. Because, as discussed above, Oconee County currently depends overwhelmingly on bonds as the only steady revenue source available to finance capital

projects, for the purposes of this section we cannot count on grants and other funding sources that will offset at least some of the cost of individual items. Therefore, based on projected debt levels established in Table PI-2 (above), the bonding capacity necessary to provide sufficient funding for the total anticipated required amount will fall short by approximately \$27,944,000. See Appendix A.

Another Consideration

The anticipated rate of growth and development in Oconee County's future gives rise to the need for a systematic approach to paying for public infrastructure and development, for the level of service and convenience demanded by the many thousands of new residents will require a more efficient approach than has been evidenced in the past. While it is reasonable to assume coming growth will bring with it additional revenues with which improvements may be accomplished, not all growth is equal in the amount of revenue generated, or additional support required. In fact, without all of the necessary tools in place to manage the amount and type of growth necessary to make it sustainable, it is possible that the needs will outweigh the ability to pay for them. This means it is important to begin to consider the effects of all our actions in terms of the impact on development, positive or negative, and how the results change the level of service necessary to support it. Therefore, we should seek to establish how much growth our existing infrastructure and facilities can support, and map out a rational approach for moving toward the densities and type of growth the people of Oconee County desire.

Priority Investment Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Priority Investment Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands and scenic areas under pressure.
2. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
3. Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.
4. Develop and implement an effective Capital Projects Program that provides the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County's citizens.
5. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.
6. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
7. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.
11. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.
12. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required.
13. Work to address the age-related problems that may arise among Oconee County's aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal efforts.
14. Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.

15. Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.
16. Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation, and to promote ecotourism opportunities.
17. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.
18. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed changes resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the rapid population growth of Oconee County.
19. Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.
20. Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.

Appendix A

Ten-Year Capital Needs Plan for Oconee County			
Anticipated Budget Year	3-Year Funding Timeframe	*Estimated Cost (based on best information available)	**Funding Source(s)
2010	Detention Facility	\$ 15,000,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Expand C & D landfill	\$ 650,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Replace Long Mountain radio	\$ 300,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Wastewater Treatment Facility to serve I-85 region	\$ 6,600,000	G.O. Bonds/ED Millage
2010	Westminster Fire/Emergency	\$ 2,500,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	10 Unit T-hanger and hanger taxiways	\$ 468,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Purchase Land Adjoining Rock Quarry as it becomes available	\$ 275,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Replace bath house (day use/ campers) at Knob Campground (High Falls)	\$ 180,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Chau Ram Park- ADA bathroom and day use area	\$ 160,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Back scan mortgages & Plats from 1999 – 2000	\$ 100,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Cobb Bridge	\$ 1,200,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
2010	Assess Viability of Future Need for Old Courthouse; Sipplast modified roof membrane for Old Courthouse, or Demolition	\$ 555,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Repave parking lot and roads at Solid Waste Complex	\$ 100,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Phase I Golden Corner Commerce Park Infrastructure	\$275,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
2010	Court House renovation	\$ 5,000,000	G.O. Bonds
	Upgrade/relocate fuel farm and maintenance shed at the Airport	\$ 180,000	G.O. Bonds
	Oblique aerial photography reflight (Pictometry)	\$ 165,000	G.O. Bonds
	Expand Library in Westminster with FF&E (3,000 sq. ft)	\$ 1,000,000	G.O. Bonds
	Upgrade Cott (Data Processing System)	\$ 100,000	G.O. Bonds
	New library facilities in Seneca with FF&E (35,238 sq. ft)	\$ 9,100,000	G.O. Bonds
	Solid Waste building for tires, used oil, and aluminum	\$ 375,000	G.O. Bonds
	Hotel & Conference Center	\$ 5,000,000	G.O. Bonds
	Pave South Cove parks gravel roads and overlay paved roads	\$ 142,000	G.O. Bonds
	Phase 2, and 3 Golden Corner Commerce Park infrastructure	Phase 2 - \$ 1,350,000 Phase 3 - \$290,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
2010	Addition/Renovation at Seneca High School	\$ 5,000,000	G.O. Bonds
2010	Addition/Renovation at West Oak High School	\$ 5,000,000	G.O. Bonds

5-Year Funding Timeframe			
	Video imaging	\$185,000	G.O. Bonds
	Update Morgue Facility & Equipment	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds
	Phase 4 Golden Corner Commerce Park Infrastructure	\$655,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Speculative Building in Commerce Park	\$400,000 (plus proceeds from prior spec building)	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Phase 5 Golden Corner Commerce Park Infrastructure	\$975,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Upgrade Wastewater treatment facility for I-85 region	\$4,000,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	8,000 sq. ft. Office Facility in Geographical Center of the County	\$1,800,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Develop and Construct Exit 3 in I-85 region	\$5,000,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	South County Library, with FF&E	\$2,000,000	G.O. Bonds
	Renovate Library in Walhalla, with FF&E	\$1,750,000	G.O. Bonds
	Replace Bookmobile	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds
	ADA Bathhouse-campground for Chau Ram Park	\$180,000	G.O. Bonds
	Renovate campsites for High Falls Park (2 phases)	\$300,000	G.O. Bonds
	New office, store, visitor center with maintenance shop at South Cove Park	\$230,000	G.O. Bonds
	Dyar Bridge	\$1,400,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Lands Bridge	\$400,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Jenkins Bridge	\$300,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Mauldin Mill Road Culvert	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Purchase land adjoining Rock Quarry as it become available	\$275,000	G.O. Bonds
	Rubber tired front end pit loader for Rock Quarry	\$950,000	G.O. Bonds
	Purchase properties surrounding land fill as they become available	\$1,500,000	G.O. Bonds
2013	New Walhalla High School	\$40 – 50 million	G.O. Bonds
2013	Addition/Renovation at Tamasee-Salem Middle & High School	\$3 – 4 million	G.O. Bonds
10-Year Funding Timeframe			
	Oblique aerial photography reflight	\$165,000	G.O. Bonds
	Video imaging (buildings)	\$185,000	G.O. Bonds
	Update Morgue facility and equipment	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds
	Purchase right-of-way extension of Commerce Way in OCCC	\$1,000,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage

	Extend Commerce Way to Armstrong Road	\$1,200,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Purchase additional acreage for OCCC	\$1,500,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Business incubator/training center- partner with Tri-County Technical College	\$3,000,000	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Build a speculative building	\$400,000 (plus proceeds from prior spec building)	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	Build an additional speculative building	\$600,000 (plus proceeds from prior spec building)	G.O. Bonds/ ED Millage
	New Superintendents House for Chau Ram	\$120,000	G.O. Bonds
	New bath house facility in South Cove campground	\$220,000	G.O. Bonds
	Replace fishing pier at South Cove	Cost TBD	G.O. Bonds
	Camp Road culvert	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge/ Millage
	McGee Bridge culvert	\$400,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Lusk Road bridge	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Lonely Road bridge	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Nectarine Circle bridge	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Conley Road bridge	\$250,000	G.O. Bonds/ Bridge Millage
	Land adjacent to Rock Quarry as available	\$275,000	G.O. Bonds
	Upgrade or replace 1 Manned Convenience Center in high growth areas	\$750,000	G.O. Bonds
	Complete original Transfer Station Plan to meet with higher garbage volumes	\$1,000,000	G.O. Bonds
	In-house tax software for tax center	Cost TBD	G.O. Bonds
	Projected Capital Expenditures - County	\$86,421,000	
	Projected Capital Expenditures - Schools	\$64,000,000	
	Total Projected Capital Expenditures	\$150,421,000	

*All costs are based on best information available

**While grants and other one-time funds may be used for part or all of the required funding, Potential Funding Sources identified in the chart only include those sources considered steady

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF OCONEE
ORDINANCE 2010-30**

**AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AN OCONEE COUNTY CONSERVATION BANK
TO FUND THE PROTECTION OF LANDS WITH SIGNIFICANT NATURAL,
CULTURAL AND/OR HISTORIC RESOURCES IN OCONEE COUNTY**

WHEREAS, no other county in South Carolina and few places in the United States have such an extraordinary array of natural, cultural and historic resources as Oconee County; and

WHEREAS, the lands and natural, cultural and historic resources of Oconee County provide economic benefits of incalculable value because they attract tourists and business to the County; and

WHEREAS, the natural resources of Oconee County, including its high quality soils and clean waters, are the foundation of the forestry and agricultural industries in the County; and

WHEREAS, many lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historic resources of Oconee County could be threatened by future development; and

WHEREAS, according to a growth projection study conducted by Dr. Craig Campbell and the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University, the amount of developed land in Oconee County will increase from 13,900 acres in 1990 to 124, 139 acres in 2030 if current trends continue; and

WHEREAS, continued growth and development are essential to keep the economy strong and to provide good jobs for the citizens of Oconee County, but the patterns of such growth and development are causing the loss of significant lands and natural, cultural, and historic resources in the County; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Oconee County have demonstrated their overwhelming support for conservation in the 2007 campaign to protect Stumphouse Mountain and Issaqueena Falls; and

WHEREAS, Oconee County itself must provide a significant and dedicated source of funding for the protection of lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historic resources through either fee simple acquisition or conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, without financial compensation, many otherwise willing landowners would not be able to permanently protect their properties with significant natural, cultural, and/or historic resources through either fee simple acquisition or conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan states that it is one of the County's priorities to establish a county bank to fund land protection; and

WHEREAS, the South Carolina General Assembly enacted the South Carolina Conservation Bank in order to protect lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historic resources in South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, additional federal, state, local and private funding programs exist in order to provide financial incentives to protect lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historic resources; and

WHEREAS, in considering which projects to approve, these land protection programs ascribe great weight to the availability and commitment of funds from other sources; and

WHEREAS, a local source of funding through the Oconee County Conservation Bank would significantly improve the chances of receiving funding from the State Bank and from other federal and state programs and private donors for projects in the County; and

WHEREAS, in order to carry out these purposes, Oconee County Council desires to establish, fund, and administer an Oconee County Conservation Bank to acquire interests in land from willing sellers that meet certain criteria and to ensure the orderly development of the County.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ordained by Oconee County Council, in meeting duly assembled and voting, with quorum present and acting by, through, and on behalf of Oconee County, a body politic and corporate and a political subdivision of the State of South Carolina, and upon third and final reading, the following:

SECTION 1: ESTABLISHMENT OF BANK.

There is hereby established the Oconee County Conservation Bank in order to protect lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historic resources in Oconee County that meet the criteria set forth in Section VI, by providing a financial incentive to willing landowners to convey either a conservation easement or fee simple title to eligible Recipients (as defined herein).

SECTION II: DEFINITIONS.

- A. “Application” means application to participate in the program addressed by this ordinance, including its grants.
- B. “Bank” or “OCCB” for purposes of this ordinance means the Oconee County Conservation Bank.
- C. “Board” means the governing board of the Bank.
- D. “Conservation Easement” means an interest in real property as defined by Chapter 8 of Title 27 South Carolina Code of Laws, the South Carolina Conservation Easement Act of 1991.
- E. “Council” or “County Council” means Oconee County Council.
- F. “County” means Oconee County, South Carolina.

- G. “Eligible OCCB Recipient” or “Recipient” means any of the following:
 - a. Oconee County;
 - b. A municipality in Oconee County;
 - c. An independent agency or commission in Oconee County whose mission directly relates to the conservation of lands and natural, cultural and historic resources;
 - d. A not-for-profit charitable corporation or trust authorized to do business in this State and organized and operated for natural resource conservation, land conservation, or historical preservation purposes, and having tax-exempt status as a public charity under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and having the power to acquire, hold, and maintain interests in land for these purposes;
 - e. Federal, state, and local agencies organized and operated for natural resource protection, land conservation, or historical preservation purposes.
- H. “Interests in lands” means fee simple titles to lands or conservation easements on land.
- I. “Land” means real property, including highlands and wetlands of any description.

SECTION III: BOARD.

- A. The Bank will be governed by a seven-member board (“Board”) appointed by Oconee County Council in accordance with the following requirements:
 - a. Each Board member’s primary residence shall be located in Oconee County; and
 - b. At least one of the appointed Board members shall be from each of the County Council Districts; and
 - c. At least one of the appointed Board members shall be a board member or executive officer of a charitable corporation or trust authorized to do business in this State that is one of the following: (i) actively engaged in the acquisition of interests in land from voluntary sellers for the purposes of natural resource or land conservation in Oconee County; or (ii) is organized for historic or cultural preservation purposes; or (iii) is an organization that represents hunting, fishing or outdoor recreation interests; and
 - d. At least one of the appointed Board members shall be an owner of rural real property who is actively engaged in the management and operation of forestlands, farmlands, or wildlife habitat; and
 - e. At least one Board member shall be actively engaged in one of the following: (i) the real estate business; or (ii) the business of appraising forestland, farmland, or conservation easements; or (iii) the business of banking, finance or accounting; or (iv) a licensed attorney admitted to practice before the South Carolina Supreme Court with an emphasis in real estate or land use law.
 - f. To the extent possible, all appointed board members should have a demonstrated background, experience, and interest in the conservation of lands with significant natural, cultural and/or historical resources.

B. The initial terms of the at-large Board members shall be for two years, the terms of the Board members from County Council District Numbers 1, 3 and 5 shall be for three (3) years, and the terms for the Board members from County Council District Numbers 2 and 4 shall be for four (4) years. Thereafter, all terms shall be for four (4) years. All members may be reappointed. Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired portion of the term.

C. Members shall serve without compensation, but may receive such mileage and per diem as may be authorized and appropriated by Oconee County Council. The Board shall elect a chair and other officers as the Board deems necessary. The Board shall adopt rules and procedures to conduct its meetings, consistent with those used by County Council.

D. The Board is a public body and its members are hereby expressly subject to, among other applicable laws and regulations, the South Carolina Ethics Act, and the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, as amended, and shall perform their duties in accordance with their provisions.

E. The Board shall meet at least three (3) times per year in regularly scheduled meetings and in special meetings as the chair may call, all open to the public (except for executive sessions when duly held in accordance with law). All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

SECTION IV: BOARD DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

- A. The Board is authorized to:
- a. Award grants from the OCCB Fund (defined herein) to “Eligible OCCB Recipients” for the purchase of land or interests in land that meet the criteria contained in Section VI; and
 - b. Apply for and receive funding for the OCCB Fund, for the Bank, from federal, state, private and other sources, to be used as provided in this ordinance; and
 - c. Receive charitable contributions and donations to the OCCB Fund, for the Bank, to be used as provided in this ordinance; and
 - d. Receive contributions to the OCCB Fund, for the Bank, in satisfaction of any public or private obligation for environmental mitigation or habitat conservation, whether such obligation arises out of law, equity, contract, regulation, administrative proceeding, or judicial proceeding. Such contributions shall be used as provided for in this ordinance.
- B. To carry out its functions, the Bank shall:
- a. Operate a program which includes:
 - i. Developing a ranking system for Applications for program participation, including grants, pursuant to the criteria contained in Section VI;
 - ii. Receiving grant and participation Applications from Eligible OCCB Recipients pursuant to Section VII;
 - iii. Evaluating Applications from Eligible OCCB Recipients for eligibility for grants and to participate in the program pursuant to Section VII;

- iv. Reviewing and ranking Applications from Eligible OCCB Recipients for grants and to participate in the program pursuant to the ranking system;
- v. Recommending the approval of certain Applications to County Council pursuant to Section VII;
- b. Establish additional guidelines and procedures, consistent with this ordinance, as necessary to implement this ordinance; and
- c. Submit an annual report to Oconee County Council concerning all matters addressed by this ordinance.

C. The County Administrator is directed to provide administrative resources and support needed to operate and manage the OCCB, other than financial resources and support, to the extent possible, and within existing resources of the County. When and if deemed appropriate by the Board, the Board may seek County Council’s approval to hire permanent staff, who will be County staff, reporting to the Administrator.

D. Operating expenses of the Bank may be paid out of the OCCB Fund in accordance with Oconee County Policies and Procedures, and, as authorized and appropriated by County Council, provided such expenses shall not exceed ten percent of the total annual OCCB funding amount.

SECTION V: OCCB FUND.

The Oconee County Treasurer shall establish an account separate and distinct from all other funds appropriated by County Council, called the Oconee County Conservation Bank Fund (the “OCCB Fund”). The OCCB Fund shall receive revenues as noted herein, and from the County according to one or more funding measures approved by Oconee County Council. The Council acknowledges and agrees that County funding measures should be undertaken as soon as feasible, consistent with overall budget priorities of the County, in order to avoid escalating land costs and lost acquisition opportunities.

SECTION VI: CRITERIA.

The Board shall use the following conservation criteria in developing a ranking system for Applications pursuant to Section IV.(B)(a)

- A. Environmental Sensitivity
 - a. Presence of wetlands
 - b. Frontage on USGS Blue Line Stream
 - c. Water quality classification of such stream by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
 - d. Presence of Threatened/Endangered Species
 - e. Habitat Suitable for Threatened/Endangered Species
 - f. Habitat Suitable for Native Wildlife Species
 - g. Extent of Biological Diversity
 - h. Presence of Unique Geological/Natural Features
- B. Percentage of Property Sharing a Boundary with Protected Land
- C. Historic/Cultural Features
 - a. Contains feature designated on the National Historic Register

- b. Contains feature eligible for the National Historic Register
- c. Contains Historic/Prehistoric Structures
- d. Contains Historic/Prehistoric Site or Location of a Historic Event
- D. Percentage of Property Containing Prime/Statewide Important Soil Types
- E. Extent of Active Farming on Property
- F. Extent of Public Visibility of Property
 - a. Visibility from public roads
 - b. Visibility from public land
- G. Scenic View from Property
- H. Extent of Public Access
- I. Location of Property
- J. Threat of Development
- K. Size of Property

The Board shall use the following financial criteria in developing the ranking system for Applications for participation in the program and grants pursuant to Section IV.(B)(a)

- A. Funding percentage of appraised fee simple or conservation easement value requested;
- B. Amount of applicable partnerships, matching contributions, management agreements, management leases, and similar collaborations among state agencies, federal agencies, Eligible OCCB Recipients, and local governments, boards, and commissions;
- C. No matching funds or other contributions are required to receive grants from the OCCB Fund. However, the commitment of such other funds shall be a factor considered by the Board in its evaluation and recommendation of the applications.

SECTION VII: PROGRAM AND PROCEDURES.

- A. Application
 - a. An Eligible OCCB Recipient independently or in conjunction with the landowner may apply for a grant from the OCCB by submitting an Application in accordance with the rules and procedures established by the Board under and consistent with this ordinance;
 - b. Within 5 business days of the submittal of an Application to the OCCB, the Eligible OCCB Recipient must notify in writing all landowners adjacent to the subject property of the Application. Contiguous landowners and other interested parties may submit in writing to the Board their views in support of or in opposition to the Application.
 - c. Prior to the submission of its Application, the Eligible OCCB Recipient must notify in writing the owner of the land that is the subject of the Application of the following:
 - i. That interests in land purchased with OCCB funds result in a permanent conveyance of such interests in land from the landowner to the Eligible OCCB Recipient and its assigns; and
 - ii. That it may be in the landowner's interest to retain independent legal counsel, perform appraisals, create surveys, and seek other professional advice; and

The Application must contain an affirmation that the notice requirement of this subsection has been met, and the commitment of the landowner to convey title to or an easement on the property if grant funds are approved for the property, all signed by the landowner and duly notarized by a notary public of the State of South Carolina.

- d. In each Application, the Eligible OCCB Recipient must provide information regarding how the proposal meets the criteria contained in Section VI.
 - e. For each grant Application the applicant shall specify:
 - i. The purpose of the Application;
 - ii. How the Application satisfies the criteria contained in Section VI;
 - iii. The uses to which the land will be put;
 - iv. The party responsible for managing and maintaining the land; and
 - v. The parties responsible for enforcing any conservation easement or other restrictions upon the land.
 - f. Where an Eligible OCCB Recipient seeks an OCCB grant to acquire fee title to land, the Eligible OCCB Recipient must demonstrate both the expertise and financial resources to manage the land for the purposes set forth in its application. The Board, on a case by case basis, may require an Eligible OCCB Recipient acquiring fee title to land to place a conservation easement on such property to ensure its permanent protection.
 - g. Where an Eligible OCCB Recipient seeks an OCCB grant to acquire a conservation easement, the Eligible OCCB Recipient must demonstrate both the expertise and financial resources to monitor and enforce the restrictions placed upon the land for the purposes set forth in its application. The Board shall evaluate each proposal to determine the qualifications of the proposed managing party and to determine whether the proposed management is consistent with the purposes set forth in the application.
- B. Application Review**
- a. The Board shall accept three rounds of Applications per calendar year in accordance with the following deadlines: April 1st, August 1st, and November 1st.
 - b. The Board shall evaluate each Application according to the criteria contained in Section VI of this ordinance and recommend approval of Application and associated grants to County Council based on how well the proposals meet these criteria. The more criteria a proposal satisfies, the higher priority it shall be given.
 - c. The Board shall evaluate each Application and submit recommendations to County Council within sixty (60) days of each Application deadline referred to in Section VII.(B)(a). The recommendation of an Application may be for full approval, partial approval or disapproval.
 - d. In recommending the awarding of a grant from the OCCB Fund the Board shall set forth findings that indicate:
 - i. How the Application meets the criteria set forth in Section VI;
 - ii. The purpose of the award and the use to which the land will be put;
 - iii. The party responsible for managing and maintaining the land;

- iv. The party responsible for monitoring and enforcing any conservation easements or other restrictions upon the land;
 - v. How the parties designated in items (iii) and (iv) possess the expertise and financial resources to fulfill their obligations;
 - vi. The availability of funds in the OCCB Fund for the award;
 - vii. Any other findings or information relevant to the award.
- e. County Council shall take action on the Board's recommendations within thirty (30) days of the Board's submission thereof. The Council shall consider and vote on each recommendation individually. The Council shall accept the recommendation of the Board for the award of a grant unless (i) it is determined that there are not sufficient funds in the OCCB Fund for the award or (ii) at least a majority of the Council members present and voting vote to reject the recommendation. If the Board's recommendation for the award of a grant is approved by Council, the award shall be made and the transaction closed in accordance with Section VII.(C) of this ordinance.
- f. The Board may only authorize grants to purchase interests in lands at or below fair market value pursuant to a current (within three (3) months of grant approval by County Council), independent certified appraisal. The Board shall establish reasonable procedures and requirements to ensure the confidentiality of appraisals.

C. Grant Award

- a. The Board shall notify the Eligible OCCB Recipient of its recommendation and the action taken by County Council on the Application
- b. If the Board recommends the Application in whole or in part and the recommendation is approved by County Council in accordance with Section VII.(B)(e) of this ordinance, the Eligible OCCB Recipient and the owner of the interest in the land identified in the application shall have a period of four (4) months from the date of the County Council's approval to decide whether to accept the award and close the transaction.
- c. The Eligible OCCB Recipient shall submit the following required documents to the Board prior to closing the transaction:
 - i. A certified appraisal satisfying the requirements of Section VII.(B)(f);
 - ii. Oconee County and the Bank must be indemnified as to title in the amount of the grant, and this indemnification shall be secured by a title insurance policy acceptable to the Board and obtained by the grant recipient. The indemnification requirement as to title may be waived by the Board in extraordinary cases where insurable title is unobtainable, the risk of adverse claims are small, the land in question presents a particularly valuable conservation opportunity according to the criteria of Section VI, and the cost of the interest in land acquired reflects the lack of insurable title.
 - iii. In order to identify potential liability pursuant to applicable state or federal environmental laws or regulations, a certified

environmental hazard assessment shall be conducted on lands before the disbursement of OCCB funds for the acquisition of all interest in such lands except as provided below in Section VII.(C)(c)(iv).

- iv. An Application for such interest in land shall qualify as a small grant application if the amount requested is less than thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) or 10% of the appraised fair market value of either the conservation easement or fee simple acquisition, whichever value is smaller. The environmental assessment required in Section VII.(C)(iii) shall be waived for applications for interest in land qualified as a small grant, as defined herein, unless specifically required on a case by case basis by the Board.
- d. The Bank and Eligible OCCB Recipients receiving monies from the OCCB Fund shall retain all records of acquisition of interests in land with OCCB Funds including, but not limited to deeds, title documents, contracts, surveys, inventories, appraisals, title insurance policies, environmental assessments, and closing documents.
- e. The Board shall disburse OCCB Funds to Eligible OCCB Recipients and the closing shall occur after all applicable requirements of this section are fully satisfied, provided the closing shall take place no later than one (1) year after the Eligible OCCB Recipient and owner of the interest in land decide to accept the award unless the Board, for good cause shown, extends the deadline for a period not to exceed six (6) months.

SECTION VIII: USE OF FUNDS.

- A. Only Eligible OCCB Recipients may acquire interests in lands with OCCB funds.
- B. The Bank may purchase an interest in land on behalf of Oconee County subject to the criteria contained in Section VI.
- C. OCCB funds shall be used only by Eligible OCB Recipients for the acquisition of interests in land, including closing costs. "Closing costs" shall include recording fees, deed transfer or documentary stamp fees, the costs of performing the work and providing the documentation required under Section VII.(C)(c), attorneys' fees, and the cost of obtaining or updating surveys, but in no event shall more than \$____ in closing costs be paid per award. OCCB funds shall not be used to pay general operating expenses or endowment requests of Eligible OCCB Recipients, nor shall OCCB funds be used for the management or maintenance of acquired interests in land. OCCB funds shall be disbursed only at the closing of transactions in which an interest in land is acquired.
- D. All interests in land acquired with OCCB funds shall be held by the Eligible OCCB Recipient approved by the Board to acquire the interest in land; except that an interest in land obtained with OCCB funds may be assigned from one Eligible OCCB Recipient to another upon approval of the Board by majority vote.
- E. The owner of the fee simple title to property upon which a conservation easement was purchased with OCCB funds, whether the original owner that conveyed the conservation easement or a successor-in-interest, may reacquire and thereby terminate or extinguish that conservation easement, whether in whole or in part, only by complying with all of the following:

(i) proving that the original conservation and/or historic values of the protected land have been lost or substantially impaired by factors beyond the owner's control, (ii) obtaining unanimous approval by the OCCB Board, (iii) obtaining unanimous approval by County Council, (iv) obtaining approval by the Oconee County Court of Common Pleas, and (v) making payment in cash of the current fair market value of the conservation easement, as determined by a certified appraisal.

F. If an Eligible OCCB Recipient acquires fee simple title to land for conservation and/or historic purposes with OCCB funds, that land may not be sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or converted to a use other than the use set forth in the grant award except by complying with all of the following: (i) proving that the original conservation and/or historic values of the protected land have been lost or substantially impaired by factors beyond the owner's control, (ii) obtaining unanimous approval by the OCCB Board, (iii) obtaining unanimous approval by County Council, (iv) obtaining approval by the Oconee County Court of Common Pleas, and (v) making payment in cash of the current fair market value of the protected land, as determined by a certified appraisal.

G. If any interests in lands that have been acquired by an Eligible OCCB Recipient with OCCB Funds are extinguished, terminated, sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or converted pursuant to Section VIII.(E) and (F), the Eligible OCCB Recipient extinguishing, selling, transferring, assigning, alienating, or converting the interests in land shall replace them with the interests in land of substantially equal current fair market value, with any excess from the sale of the prior interests being used by contribution to the OCCB Fund. The replacement land shall have the same or greater significance when evaluated under the criteria set forth in Section VI. The Board shall verify that suitable replacement interests in lands have been identified and will be obtained before authorizing that any interest in land purchased with OCCB funds be extinguished, sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or conveyed. Where replacement in whole or in part is impossible, funds realized which are not used for replacement interests in land must be credited to the OCCB Fund. Where funding for an original acquisition was from multiple sources, funds realized must be credited to the OCCB Fund under this section in proportion equal to the contribution that OCCB Funds made to the original acquisition.

SECTION IX: EMINENT DOMAIN OR CONDEMNATION PROCEEDINGS.

OCCB Funds may not be used to acquire interests in lands or other interests in real property through the exercise of any power of eminent domain or condemnation proceedings.

SECTION X: RECREATIONAL AND ECONOMIC USE.

The provisions of this ordinance shall not be construed to eliminate or unreasonably restrict hunting, fishing, farming, forestry, timber management, or wildlife habitat management, as regulated by the law of this State, upon lands for which interests in lands are obtained pursuant to this ordinance. These and other traditional and compatible activities may be conducted, where appropriate, upon lands protected with OCCB Funds.

SECTION XI: CONSERVATION EASEMENTS.

When OCCB funds are used to purchase a conservation easement on land, the conservation easement shall be the controlling legal document regarding what is and what is not permitted upon the land, how the land will be protected, and what rights are vested with the Eligible OCCB Recipient and its assigns which holds the conservation easement. If any inconsistencies or ambiguities arise between the provisions of this ordinance and the terms and conditions of the conservation easement purchased with OCCB Funds, the terms and conditions of the conservation easement shall prevail. The Eligible OCCB Recipient shall have sole responsibility for monitoring the property subject to the conservation easement and for enforcing the terms and conditions thereof.

SECTION XI: HISTORIC PROPERTIES.

The Board may authorize up to ten percent of the annual OCCB appropriation to acquire interests in land that qualify solely as a historic or cultural feature according to the criteria contained in Section VI.

SECTION XII: EFFECTIVE DATE; SEVERABILITY.

This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon third reading. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any circumstances is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid for any reason, this holding shall not affect the other provisions of this ordinance or the application thereof which shall be given effect without the invalid provisions or application, and to this end, the provisions of this ordinance are severable.

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Ordained, in meeting duly assembled, this ____ day of _____, 2010.

ATTEST:

Elizabeth Hulse,
Clerk to Oconee County Council

Reginald Dexter,
Chairman, Oconee County Council

First Reading:
Second Reading:
Public Hearing:
Third & Final Reading:

DRAFT

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF OCONEE
ORDINANCE 2010-31

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN OCONEE COUNTY REAL PROPERTY, CONTINGENT ON THE SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF ALL DUE DILIGENCE AND CONTRACTUAL REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY OCONEE COUNTY, TO THE SATISFACTION OF OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING THE COMPLETION OF SUCH DUE DILIGENCE AND CONTRACTS; AUTHORIZING THE RECEIPT OF ALL LAWFUL FUNDS AUTHORIZED FOR SUCH PURCHASE; AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF ALL CONTRACTS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATED TO SUCH PURCHASE; AUTHORIZING THE AMENDMENT OF THE CURRENT OCONEE COUNTY BUDGET ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE ACCOUNTING AND FUNDING FOR THE TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTING FOR AND PURCHASING SUCH PROPERTY; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

WHEREAS, Oconee County, South Carolina (the “County”), a body politic and corporate and political subdivision of the State of South Carolina, acting by and through the Oconee County Council (the “County Council”), is authorized and empowered by Section 4-9-30, South Carolina Code, 1976, as amended (the “Code”), among other authorities, to purchase and own real property, for the benefit and well being of the County and its people; and

WHEREAS, Oconee County is authorized by the Code to enter into certain intergovernmental agreements with other political subdivisions of the State, to carry out the County’s authority, responsibilities, and duties under the Code, including, without limitation, economic development efforts of the County; and

WHEREAS, by the Code and by its own internal policies and procedures, the County is required to account for its expenditure of public funds, to provide for the accounting for such funds and their expenditure, and to appropriate such funds in accordance with the Code and County policies and procedures; and

WHEREAS, by the Code and by Oconee County policy and procedure, the County Council is authorized and required to enter into contracts for certain purchases involving the appropriation and expenditure of public funds; and

WHEREAS, the Oconee County Budget Ordinance provides the appropriation and accounting authority for the expenditure of major public funds by Oconee County Council, and, from time to time, must be amended when County Council desires to appropriate and expend public funds in addition to those previously budgeted for in the Oconee County Budget Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, prior to the purchase of real property, as authorized in this Ordinance, any public body, including Oconee County, must do appropriate due diligence, to ensure that public funds are being expended wisely and in the best interests of the public body and the public; and

WHEREAS, Oconee County, acting by and through its County Council, has identified a parcel of real property, known to Oconee County Council at the time of each of the readings of this Ordinance, which is needed to further the interests of Oconee County and its people, and is available for purchase by Oconee County; and

WHEREAS, Oconee County, acting by and through its County Council, desires: to explore the possibility of purchasing the parcel; to explore the facts and circumstances involving the parcel; to conduct the due diligence required for such purchase, and to authorize the purchase of the parcel, contingent on the satisfactory completion of all due diligence and contractual requirements established by Oconee County Council through the Oconee County Code of Ordinances, the Oconee County Budget Ordinance, this Ordinance, and other determinations of Oconee County Council; to explore the purchase options for the parcel of property and the funding requirements therefore; to identify the sources of funding for the parcel; to authorize the receipt of all lawful funds available to the County and authorized and available for such purchase, including, without limitation, grant funds, contributions from private entities, and contributions from other political subdivisions; to prepare all documentation related to such purchase, including, without limitation, all contractual documents, all intergovernmental agreements, and other documents related to such purchase; and, upon the successful completion of all such administrative work required for the prudent and successful purchase of such property, to authorize the expenditure of public funds for such purchase and to amend the Oconee County Budget Ordinance to provide the accounting and funding for the total cost of contracting for and purchasing such property:

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby ordained by Oconee County Council, in meeting duly assembled, that:

1. The Oconee County Administrator is hereby authorized and directed to: explore the possibility of purchasing the parcel of real property concerned in this ordinance, more specifically identified as Property 3 on Exhibit A of this Ordinance; explore the facts and circumstances involving the parcel; conduct the due diligence required for such purchase; explore the purchase options for the parcel of property and the funding requirements therefore; identify the sources of funding for the parcel; accept and account for all lawful funds available to the County and authorized and available for such purchase, including, without limitation, grant funds, contributions from private entities, and contributions from other political subdivisions; prepare all documentation related to such purchase, including, without limitation, all contractual documents, all intergovernmental agreements, and other documents related to such purchase; and, bring all such matters, in the form of recommendations, back to Oconee County Council for such approval as may be required, by and through the successful enactment of this Ordinance.

2. Contingent upon the satisfactory completion of all due diligence and contractual requirements established by Oconee County Council, herein and otherwise, and upon successful enactment of this Ordinance, the Chairman of Oconee County Council and the Oconee County

Administrator are hereby authorized and directed to execute all contractual documents, all intergovernmental agreements, and all other documents related to the purchase authorized by this Ordinance, and, upon the successful completion of all such administrative work required for the prudent and successful purchase of such property, to expend the public funds authorized by this Ordinance, and more specifically as set forth on Exhibit A, hereto, for such purchase, and to complete the purchase of the parcel.

3. To the extent that any such amendment is required to comport with the funding for such purchases set forth on Exhibit A, hereto, the Oconee County budget ordinance is hereby amended so as to provide the accounting and funding for the total cost of contracting for and purchasing such properties, in the amounts as set forth on Exhibit A, hereto.

4. The Chairman of Oconee County Council and the Oconee County Administrator are hereby authorized and directed to execute, enter into, and deliver all documents necessary for the completion of the actions authorized and directed in this Ordinance, including, but not limited to, all contractual documents, all intergovernmental agreements, and all other transactional documents.

5. Should any portion of this Ordinance be deemed unconstitutional or otherwise unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such determination shall not affect the remaining terms and provisions of this ordinance, all of which are hereby deemed separable.

6. All orders, resolutions, and enactments of Oconee County Council inconsistent herewith are, to the extent of such inconsistency only, hereby repealed, revoked, and rescinded.

7. This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force and effect from and after third reading and enactment by Oconee County Council.

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ORDAINED in meeting, duly assembled, this _____ day of _____, 2010..

OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

(SEAL)

By: _____
Reginald T. Dexter, Chairman, County Council
Oconee County, South Carolina

ATTEST:

By: _____
Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to County Council
Oconee County, South Carolina

- First Reading:
- Second Reading:
- Public Hearing:
- Third Reading:

PROPERTY 1

- A. Property description: England Property (+/- 415 acres), Hwy. 11, Oconee County
- B. Purchase price: TBD
- C. Source of funding: TBD
- D. Budget ordinance amendment required: TBD
- E. Due diligence required: TBD
- F. Contractual documents required: Purchase contract, closing documents
- G. Intergovernmental Agreement required: No

Exhibit A

**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: Sept. 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

South Carolina State Visitors Guide Advertising request.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

“Smiles” is the South Carolina State Visitors Guide produced annually by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism. The Visitors guide is placed in tourism destinations, SC Welcome Centers, local and national visitor’s centers and convention bureaus, as well as shipped nationally and internationally. The visitors guide is also available for viewing online at www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

PRT recommends an expenditure from the 75% Local Accommodations Tax fund of up to \$6,000.00 for a 1/2 page vertical advertisement showcasing Oconee County Waterfalls for the 2011 “Smiles” visitors guide. As a measuring device, the State PRT office sends our PRT office all leads requested from this ad. The current ad in the 2009 visitors guide has generated over 1500 leads for Oconee County through July. We respond to each lead with visitor information. This is an acceptable use of Local Accommodations Tax funds, as described in State Law 6-1-500. The CVB will be splitting the costs of this ad with PRT

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? Yes / No [review #2001-15 on Procurement’s website]
If no, explain briefly: No, Single source with State Ad agency

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of expenditure of funds for advertising Oconee County in the 2011 South Carolina State visitors guide.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The total cost of this project will not exceed \$12,000.00 with \$6,000 coming from the 75% local ATAX fund and \$6,000 from the CVB. The existing balance of the 75% fund is \$79,522.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: Yes
If yes, who is matching and how much: \$6,000-CVB

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: No
If yes, who is matching and how much:

ATTACHMENTS

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney _____ Finance _____ Grants _____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Phil Shirley
Phil Shirley, PRT Director

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

Council has directed that they receive their agenda packages a week prior to each Council meeting, therefore, Agenda Items Summaries must be submitted to the Administrator for his review/approval no later than 12 days prior to each Council meeting. It is the Department Head / Elected Officials responsibility to ensure that all approvals are obtained prior to submission to the Administrator for inclusion on an agenda.

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**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: 9-7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

Local ATAX-Reprint 20,000 PRT Camping Brochures

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

The Parks and Recreation brochure highlighting the county parks is almost out of stock. This request is to update and reprint 20,000 more copies for distribution. These brochures are available at all the South Carolina Welcome Centers throughout the State and used in promotions, trade shows and mail outs. PRT also has a contract with Upcountry Brochure Service to distribute these brochures in over 100 brochure racks in Upstate SC and Northeast GA

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? Yes / No [review #2001-15 on Procurement's website]

If no, explain briefly: Yes

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of expenditure of funds for re-publishing PRT brochures.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Up to \$2428.00 from the 75% fund of the Local Accommodations Tax for 20,000 9'X12' color brochures. The existing balance of the 75% fund is \$79,522.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: No

If yes, who is matching and how much:

ATTACHMENTS

Brochure

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney

_____ Finance

_____ Grants

_____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Phil Shirley
Phil Shirley, PRT Director

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

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**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: September 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

ATAX grant request from Walhalla Merchants Association in the amount of \$4,630.00.00 for Radio/TV/Newspaper/Magazine Advertising to promote 2010 Oktoberfest. Request approved in ATAX Committee on 08/11/10 by a unanimous vote.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

State ATAX funds are received quarterly and 65% of those funds are Tourism Related funds that are to be disbursed as recommended by the ATAX committee and approved by County Council. All ATAX grant recipients are required by state law to turn in intermediate reports every 60 days to the progress of the grant and a final report upon completion of the grant. These reports are placed in the grant folder, which is kept active by the ATAX chairperson until the grant is considered complete, and then it is stored by the PRT office.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

Due to previous tourism impact and coordination of advertising with Walhalla Chamber of Commerce from the 30% ATAX fund, the ATAX committee approved 45% of the original request which was \$10,289.20.

The Oktoberfest is held yearly in Walhalla to celebrate the City of Walhalla heritage and the cultural history of Oconee County including cultural music, entertainment, and arts and crafts.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? No

If no, explain briefly: ATAX Grant

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of ATAX grant request of \$4,630.00 to the Walhalla Merchants Association.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Current ATAX fund balance is \$35,095.48. We have two ATAX requests this grant cycle. If both requests are approved by County Council; the remaining balance will be \$17,965.48

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: Yes

If yes, who is matching and how much: Walhalla Chamber, Walhalla Merchants-\$7800

ATTACHMENTS

Walhalla Merchants Association Grant Application

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney

_____ Finance

_____ Grants

_____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Phil Shirley, PRT Director
Department Head/Elected Official

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

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**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: September 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

ATAX grant request from Carolina Heritage Fair in the amount of \$12,500.00 for Advertising the Carolina Foothills Heritage Foothills Fair via internet, network television, magazine, and special interest papers/publications. Request approved in ATAX Committee on 08-11-10.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

State ATAX funds are received quarterly and 65% of those funds are Tourism Related funds that are to be disbursed as recommended by the ATAX committee and approved by County Council. All ATAX grant recipients are required by state law to turn in intermediate reports every 60 days to the progress of the grant and a final report upon completion of the grant. These reports are placed in the grant folder, which is kept active by the ATAX chairperson until the grant is considered complete, and then it is stored by the PRT office.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

Due to previous tourism impact of 50%, ATAX Committee approved \$12,500 of the original \$24,999 requested. ATAX funds will be used to enhance participation in the Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair. The fair will focus on music, arts, crafts, livestock, heritage plants and crops designed to attract visitors from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? Yes / No [review #2001-15 on Procurement's website]
If no, explain briefly: NO-ATAX grant

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of ATAX grant request of \$12,500.00 to the Carolina Heritage Fair.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Current ATAX fund balance is \$34,619.06. We have five ATAX requests this grant cycle. If all five requests are approved by County Council; the remaining balance will be \$335.26

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: Yes

If yes, who is matching and how much: \$79,000 from Fair Sponsorships, vendor fees, personal donations and fundraising.

ATTACHMENTS

Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair Application

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney _____ Finance _____ Grants _____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Phil Shirley, PRT Director
Department Head/Elected Official

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

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**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: Sept. 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

ATAX Expenditure of \$22,630 from the 30% ATAX fund distributed to the Oconee Tourism Commission, a Commission representing the Chambers of Commerce within Oconee County. This budget was approved by unanimous vote at the August 17, 2010 meeting of the Oconee Tourism Commission.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

In accordance to SC Code of Laws 6-4-10 (3), Oconee County selected the Chambers of Commerce collectively in 1992 through the Oconee Tourism Commission to manage this fund. The Oconee Tourism Commission is made up of seven members representing all three Chambers of Commerce including 3 from the Greater Oconee Chamber, two from the Greater Walhalla Chamber and two from the Greater Westminster Chamber. The Oconee Tourism Commission shall submit for approval a budget for the planned expenditures to County Council. This will be done twice a year following the receipts of the 3rd quarter and 4th quarter checks.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

Budget Breakdown includes \$4,750 to **both** Westminster Chamber for SC Apple Festival advertising and Walhalla Chamber for Oktoberfest advertising to include TV and radio advertising with WYFF 4, Tri-State Radio advertising in Clayton, Toccoa, Franklin, and Sylva, newspaper advertising in Toccoa, Highlands, Cashiers and Greenville, multi-media advertising and brochure printing. Also included in the budget is \$13,130 to the Greater Oconee Chamber for website development, TV and Radio advertising for City of Seneca events and Oconee Community Theatre events.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2001-15 guidelines? Yes / No [review #2001-15 on Procurement's website]
If no, explain briefly: N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of budget of planned expenditures

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

\$22,630 with funds coming from the 30% fund of the State ATAX balance, which has already been forwarded to the Oconee Tourism Commission as prescribed by SC Code of Laws. If approved, the remaining balance would be \$0.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL GRANT REQUESTS:

Are Matching Funds Available: Yes / No
If yes, who is matching and how much:

ATTACHMENTS

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney _____ Finance _____ Grants _____ Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Phil Shirley, PRT Director
Department Head/Elected Official

Scott Moulder, County Administrator

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**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: Tuesday, September 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM**

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

1. Approve budget revision for the Roads and Bridges Department.
2. Award the purchase of four (4) 2011 Ford F-250 ¾ ton pick-up trucks in the amount of \$101,628.00 to Benson Ford Mercury of Easley, SC, per State Contract #4400001705 for Oconee County Roads and Bridges Department.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

The trucks will be used in the everyday operations of the Roads and Bridges Department. The trucks will replace 3 (three) 1999 Ford F-250's and a 1995 Chevy 2500. These vehicles have high mileage and high maintenance costs. One truck will be retained by the Motor Pool for use as a spare and the remainder will be sold at auction on GovDeals.

In January of 2010, Procurement issued a bid for three 2010 or 2011 ¾ ton trucks, with generic specifications so any dealer could respond. The County received six bids and all were higher than the State Contract price for 2011 Ford F-250 trucks. All bids were rejected and Council approved the purchase from the State Contract. Therefore, Procurement is recommending that these four 2011 Ford F-250 trucks also be purchased from the State Contract.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2010-02 guidelines? Yes

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve attached Budget Revision Form
2. Award the purchase of four (4) 2011 Ford F-250 ¾ ton pick-up trucks in the amount of \$101,628.00 to Benson Ford Mercury of Easley, SC, per State Contract #4400001705 for Oconee County Roads and Bridges Department

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Roads and Bridges was budgeted \$150,000 to purchase equipment and vehicles and one pick-up truck was approved in this budget. A budget revision is included requesting County Council to amend the Roads and Bridges budget to include the purchase of three (3) additional 2011 Ford F-250, ¾ ton pick-up trucks in place of other items requested in the original 2010-2011 budget. The requested budget was reduced from \$998,066 to \$150,000. Therefore, based on this reduction, it would be more beneficial for the Roads and Bridges Department to replace four (4) pick-up trucks instead of purchasing one large piece of equipment. The other equipment and vehicles initially requested will be included in the 2011-2012 Budget.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Budget Revision Form
2. State Contract Pricing

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ **County Attorney** _____ **Finance** _____ **Grants** _____ **Procurement**

Submitted or Prepared By:

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Department Head/Elected Official

T. Scott Moudler, County Administrator

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Gary Hodgins, Procurement Manager
Email: ghodgin@mamo.sc.gov
Telephone: (803) 737-0620

Materials Management Office
1201 Main Street, Suite 600
Columbia, SC 29201

Section: V
Page: 15
Date: 11/01/09

TRUCK, PICK-UP, ¾ TON, 4 X 4, EXTENDED CAB, HEAVY DUTY

Contract No: 4400001705 Current Contract Term: 11/1/2009-10/31/2010
Model: Ford F-250 Commodity Code: 07202
Contractor: Benson Ford Mercury Contact Person: Pete Dawley
PO Box 649 E-Mail: Group3race@aol.com
Easley, SC 29640
Telephone: 800-728-5706 Fax:
Delivery: 60-90 Days ARO

Base Price: \$24,599

ADDS:

	Total Adds	\$	_____
DEDUCTS:			
Extended Cab	\$	1649.00	_____
Electric Winch	\$	1525.00	_____
Trailer Towing Package	\$	STD	_____
Power Windows and Door Locks	\$	743.00	_____
Step Bar- Entry / Egress (enter "NR" if step up is ≤ 19")	\$	221.00	_____
	Total Deducts	\$	4138.00

Click link below for an itemized listing of items included in the "Base Price":

[TRUCK, PICK-UP, ¾ TON, 4 X 4, EXTENDED CAB, HEAVY DUTY](#)

[BACK TO PICK UP INDEX](#)

2011 Ford F-250	
SC Base Price	\$24,599.00
Add Off Road Package	\$208.00
Add spray-in bedliner	\$300.00
Sales Tax	\$300.00
Sub Total	\$25,407.00
Grand total (4)	\$101,628.00

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY
OCONEE COUNTY, SC

COUNCIL MEETING DATE: September 7, 2010
COUNCIL MEETING TIME: 7:00 PM

ITEM TITLE OR DESCRIPTION:

Award of a one year contract for boring of fiber optic cabling for the FOCUS Broadband Project to Southern Pipeline Utility, Inc., of Hayesville, NC, in the amount of \$1,800,000.00 per the award of bid 09-24 on April 19, 2010.

BACKGROUND OR HISTORY:

On April 19, 2010, the Oconee County Procurement department awarded Bid 09-24 in the amount of \$19,000 to Southern Pipeline Utility, Inc. This purpose of this bid was to establish a contract with a vendor for boring fiber optic cable. The bid had two parts. First was a single project to bore fiber optic cabling from the Pine Street Administrative Offices to the Walhalla Library, approximately 2400 feet. The second component was to establish pricing per foot for the installation of fiber optic cabling, including all materials and labor costs that could be used for future projects. Southern Pipeline completed the library project successfully and the County is satisfied with their work. The bid allowed for a one year term with four one-year extensions for a total of five years.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CONCERNS:

On August 18, 2010, Oconee County received notification that we had been awarded nearly ten million dollars from the NTIA Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program to install a fiber optic communications network. This project, known as Oconee FOCUS (Fiber Optics Creating Unified Solutions) plans to build a 245 mile fiber optic network to service the rural parts of the county and connect with high-speed networks across the state. One of the terms of this grant award is that the County is "shovel-ready" to begin this project within 30 days. Therefore by contracting with Southern Pipeline Utility, Inc. using pricing previously bid and awarded, we can meet the terms of this grant. The amount of this first one year contract was determined by taking the per foot price for 80 miles of boring, which is one third of the total 245 mile fiber optic network.

COMPLETE THIS PORTION FOR ALL PROCUREMENT REQUESTS:

Does this request follow Procurement Ordinance #2010-02 guidelines? Yes

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends award of this one year contract to Southern Pipeline Utility, Inc., of Hayesville, NC, in the amount not to exceed \$1,800,000.00, per the award of Bid 09-24 on April 19, 2010.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

This contract will be funded from the Broadband budget established for this grant project.

ATTACHMENTS

Reviewed By/ Initials:

_____ County Attorney _____ Finance _____ Grants PC Procurement

Submitted or Prepared By:

Approved for Submittal to Council:

Robert Courtney
Dept. Head/Elected Official

T. Scott Moulder
T. Scott Moulder, County Administrator

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MINIMUM SPECIFICATIONS

1. Purpose of Bid:

The purpose of this bid is to establish a contract with a vendor for boring fiber optic cable for Oconee County and is divided into two components. The first is a single project to bore fiber optic cable from the Pine Street Administrative Offices to the Walhalla Library. The second component will establish pricing for the installation of fiber optic cabling per foot, which will include all materials, including egress from the building, and all labor costs, including any engineering costs. One Contractor will be awarded the first phase to complete the project for the Library. Upon successful completion, inspection and sign off of this project, this Contractor will then be designated as Oconee County's primary resource for future installations of fiber optic cable. The County expects to then sign a one year contract, with four one-year renewals, for a total of five years. The selected vendor must provide all engineering work in the price per foot cost. An engineering plan/drawing will be required for all work.

2. Scope of Work for Pine Street to Library Project:

The Pine Street to Library project consists of running fiber optic cable between the Oconee County Administration Office (415 S Pine Street Walhalla, SC 29691) and Oconee County Public Library Walhalla Branch (501 W. South Broad Street Walhalla, SC 29691). The fiber must come out of the Pine Street wiring closet, down Pine Street, left to the Library, and into the Library wiring closet. The distance is approximately 2400 feet. The project must be horizontally bored (no exceptions) at a minimum depth of six (6) feet. Two (2) Innerduct conduits must be installed with minimum diameter of 1 inch and the second 1.25 inch for the entire distance of approximately 2400 feet. Four (4) Quazite handholes must be installed to give access to the conduit. Twelve-strand single mode fiber cable will be pulled in to the one inch conduit from Pine Street to the Walhalla Library. A locatable pull string must be installed in the 1.25" conduit to allow future fiber installation. This conduit must have a locatable conductor cable to allow easy location of the buried conduit. Egress conduit and fittings are required for the entrance/exit of both buildings. All work must be completed in accordance with state/local building codes. All permits (DOT, City, etc) are to be handled by selected vendor. The selected vendor must include all splicing and materials associated with splicing in the quote. All engineering work for this project must be included in price.

3. Suggested Required Materials for Pine Street to Library:

- 1" minimum Innerduct conduit (~2400')
- 1.25" minimum Innerduct conduit for future fiber pull (~2400')
- Four 24"x36" Quazite handholes
- Locate conductor cable
- 12 strand Single Mode (SM) Dielectric Fiber Optic Cable (FoC)
- 2 building Egress conduit & fittings
- All materials must have sales receipt to prove material is "new"

4. Price Submission Requirements:

Price should be listed as 1.) complete job 2.) broken down by cost per foot which includes all labor, engineering, splicing, and materials for job. This per foot charge will be used for future fiber work and this cost will be the "not to exceed" cost. The term of the contract will be for one year with option to renew four times (years) for a total of five years.



NOTES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
September 2, 2010

Ongoing Project Status/Staff Report: County Engineer:

PC-RD s/o

MOTION: It is the committee's recommendation that Council approve a correction to the approved road listing [change Concord Industrial to Industrial Park Place] for the paving contract.

Proposed Ordinance Review/Discussion:

Ordinance 2010-17:

The Committee recommendation that this ordinance come back to full Council for Public Hearing and third and final reading at the September 21, 2010 Council meeting.

Ordinance 2010-26:

The Committee will review this matter further and tabled further discussion until the next scheduled Transportation Committee meeting.

Ordinance 2010-28:

The Committee recommendation is that this ordinance be sent to Council for First Reading at the September 21, 2010 Council meeting.

Approved Citizen Appearances / Requests

Diamond Drive [WA-306] / Ms. Susan Hopkins

It is the Committees recommendation that this matter be turned over to the attorney to begin closure of the roadway.

Alice Lane / Ms. Tammy Tompkins

The Committee after discussion instructed the County Engineer to send a letter to the property owners outlining the County's position and clearly stating that 100% of the right-of-ways must be obtained for consideration.

Doug Hollow Road & Lake Keowee Restaurant / Mr. Richard Cottingham

The Committee instructed Mr. Cottingham to obtain a letter from Duke stating [1] their desire to have close a portion of Doug Hollow Road, [2] verify that public lake access at this location is unauthorized. In addition, members of the Committee will tour the location with Mr. Cottingham in preparation for the next meeting at which time this will be on the agenda for further discussion and possible action.

C-Fund Request Letter

The Committee discussed the draft letter presented for discussion [copy filed with these minutes] and approved the County Administrator sending the letter with one small correction to the list [noted above].

Lakewood Drive / Mr. Bruce Justice Letter to Administrator

The Committee instructed the County Administrator to inform Mr. Justice that the County maintains 260' of this roadway only and that options provided to the citizens on this road at previous Transportation Committee meetings are still available to them.

Dr. John's Road / Closure Clarification

The Committee directed the County Engineer to contact the property owners informing them that as the ACOE and other residents are no longer in favor of closure that Oconee County no longer in favors closure of this road either.

Mary Sue Lane

The Committee recommends to Council that the County not accept the road as it does not meet minimum county standards.

Oconee County, South Carolina

General Obligation Refunding Bonds, Series 2010

FINAL: Sold to UBS Financial Services on 08.12.10 - Delivery on 09.02.10

Debt Service Comparison

Date	Total P+I	CIF	Existing D/S	Net New D/S	Old Net D/S	Savings
12/31/2010	-	-	-	-	-	-
12/31/2011	966,684.31	(3,836.85)	651,840.00	1,514,587.46	1,680,599.50	64,912.04
12/31/2012	1,330,775.00	-	-	1,330,775.00	1,415,044.50	84,271.50
12/31/2013	668,800.00	-	-	668,800.00	737,286.50	68,486.50
12/31/2014	676,400.00	-	-	676,400.00	744,913.50	69,513.50
12/31/2015	676,650.00	-	-	676,650.00	747,976.00	69,326.00
12/31/2016	690,500.00	-	-	690,500.00	758,697.50	68,197.50
12/31/2017	695,900.00	-	-	695,900.00	762,631.00	65,731.00
Total	\$5,708,709.31	(3,836.85)	\$651,840.00	\$6,356,712.46	\$6,848,152.50	\$491,440.04

PV Analysis Summary (Net to Net)

Gross PV Debt Service Savings	422,152.77
Effects of changes in CIF Investments	5,806.59
Net PV Cashflow Savings @ 1.702384(AIC)	425,957.36
Net Present Value Benefit	\$425,957.36

Net PV Benefit / \$5,325,000 Refunded Principal	7.99%
Net PV Benefit / \$5,300,000 Refunding Principal	8.037%

Refunding Bond Information

Refunding Dated Date	9/02/2010
Refunding Delivery Date	9/02/2010

2010 ref final | Issue Summary | 8/14/2010 | 11:52 AM

Ross, Sinclaire & Associates, LLC
Public Finance - BNArick